

**A SMALL-GROUP STUDY  
USING THE DAVID-SAUL EMPLOYEE-EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIP  
TO EXPLORE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS  
FOR THOSE WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS**

**A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

**BY  
RAE OTIS “BILL” WEIMER**

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## DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) thesis-project is dedicated to every Christian, as we are all called into faith and good works through Jesus Christ in organizational settings and secular workplaces.

May God grant each of us faithfulness and fruitfulness in our lives and at our vocations, whomever we serve as an employee or a volunteer—especially if we labor under a bad boss—that in all our work, wherever God has placed us, we serve and work unto the Lord.

He who began a good work in you  
will carry it to completion unto the day of Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 1:6, The Bible,  
New International Version

Employees, always cooperate with your human bosses,  
not for promotion or praise,  
but with the pure motive which springs from reverence for God.  
Whatever you do, do it from the heart,  
as though you were working for God and not men.  
You may rest assured that you will receive from the Lord  
the pay that's due you.  
You are employed by Christ the Lord.

— Colossians 3:22-23, *Cotton Patch Version  
of Paul's Epistles* by Clarence Jordan

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We accomplish nothing on our own, and this was never more true than my finishing this D.Min. degree. For all of these people and their help, I praise God and thank them!

## **ABSTRACT**

This Doctor of Ministry thesis addresses a growing workplace problem—employees working under bad bosses. Using the David-Saul relationship, a young leader responding to his volatile boss, the thesis explores biblical principles and applications. Academically, the thesis discusses a theological framework about working under bad bosses and reviews pertinent literature. Practically, its methodology develops a small-group study with participant and leader guides, including daily individual readings and weekly group discussions. Conclusions are two. First, many books discuss bad bosses and workplace spirituality, but few from Christian perspectives or employee viewpoints. Second, participant feedback was favorable for the study curriculum.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING**

#### **Introduction**

Work is a fact of life—more and more, in today’s workplaces, working for a bad boss is also a fact. Books addressing this phenomenon are now plentiful. Yet there is not much in print for employees facing this problem in their workplaces, at least not from a Christian or biblical perspective. So, this Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) thesis-project offers some theological and practical concepts plus a small-group curriculum for people working under a bad boss.

Working for a bad boss is a difficulty that many people will experience sometime in their years of employment. If one is fortunate never to have had this workplace worry, wonderful. However, no doubt a friend or a colleague may have a very different work situation. Therefore, employees, to help coworkers and/or to help themselves, need to understand the employee-employer relationship when they are laboring under a bad boss.

#### **The Problem and Its Setting**

Whether people work around the house, work in a garden, work on schoolwork, or go to work at a company, everyone does work most of their lives. Self-employed people obviously work for themselves. However, when a person works in a wage-earning capacity, typically someone employs that individual for an organization. The person to whom workers reports directly is their supervisor or the boss. Even in most non-pay situations, people still work or serve under another person: a teacher, a coach, or a

volunteer group leader. Thus, even in those settings, men and women are working or functioning in various roles or relationships with a leader as their boss.

If one person supervises or directs another, this is a boss situation. There are almost limitless numbers of leader or boss positions: corporate executive officers, division directors, department heads, line managers, shop supervisors, teachers, coaches, club presidents, scout leaders, and pastors. All leaders fit somewhere on the various leadership spectrums: productive to non-productive, laissez-faire to micromanager, motivating to discouraging, tremendous to tyrannical. Although the context of this thesis is primarily the workplace, its concepts are also useful in situations such as volunteer organizations, clubs, or teams, for every group has a leader-boss.

The issue of bad bosses or bad leaders is a problem as old as the human race, or at least since the Fall, when sin fractured interpersonal relationships between the Creator and the human creatures and between Adam and Eve themselves.<sup>1</sup> One organizational consultant and a former middle manager with Walt Disney Productions observed over two decades what he called “idiot bosses,” expressed in a cartoon-like reflection by God:

On the seventh day, God relaxed and thought back over the productive week He had just completed. Suddenly remembering that He forgot to fix the Idiot Boss malfunction, God winced and said, “Oops.” Not feeling the problem was annoying enough to create an eight-day week, God let the idiot thing slide, and the rest is history. Then again, God doesn’t have to work for an idiot.<sup>2</sup>

Bad bosses and lousy leadership are not God’s fault. Their bad behavior, like our own, is the consequence of our sinful, self-centered nature. The world and workplaces have problems, because people occupying those settings have problems. Movies such as

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:6-10. Unless otherwise noted, all Bible references are from the New International Version.

<sup>2</sup> John Hoover, *How to Work for an Idiot: Survive and Thrive—Without Killing Your Boss* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2004), 9.

*The Devil Wears Prada* and the television series *The Office* portray the phenomenon of bad bosses. This management malfunctioning can occur at one's first employment and periodically through one's lifetime employment:

Virtually everyone has had some bad bosses over the course of their career, from the first job during or after high school to the present. In some case, these bosses are aware they are "bad." In other case, bosses may think they are great and don't have clue what others think of them. . . . In today's highly competitive, high-stress environment where a growing number of jobs are being outsourced and loyalty to a particular job or company is a thing of the past, the pressure and stresses that contribute to bad "bosshood" and difficult employer-employee relationship are more difficult than ever.<sup>3</sup>

Many authors have researched and recorded data on this increasingly insidious workplace issue. A social-organizational psychology professor, a licensed psychotherapist, and a senior management consultant concludes his research on cruel, brutal bosses by stating,

Information gathered from nearly a thousand working men and women over an eight-year period reveals the awful consequences of this silent suffering for both individual victims and the organizations in which they work. . . .

Abusive boss behavior has never been more abundant than it is in today's workplaces.<sup>4</sup>

A Google search for "kill the boss(es)" produced several video game sites, but few book title references, about such an extreme reactive attitude or behavior against bad bosses. However, the Amazon.com site revealed the attitudes of many employees today as reported by an Amazon.com writer (the web name is "twicesoldtales") who, in the booklist article "So you'd like to . . . Kill Your Boss," expresses this observation about this workplace problem:

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<sup>3</sup> Gini Graham Scott, *A Survival Guide for Working with Bad Bosses: Dealing with Bullies, Idiots, Back-Stabbers, and Other Managers from Hell* (New York: AMACOM, 2006), ix-x.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey A. Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), ix-x, 19.

Every day, every single day I deal with irate, burned-out customers who come in to my bookstore asking for advice on dealing with an abusive boss. In my 20 years' experience in corporate America, I strongly believe that many of the worst bosses suffer from depression and don't realize it, so I almost always steer these customers first to the self-help section rather than to the business books.<sup>5</sup>

Two researchers from the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA found the problem of bad bosses to be epidemic, and that it affects almost everyone—present, past, or future. Analyzing hierarchical harassment in organizations, Culbert and Ullum use Shakespeare's quote about lawyers for dramatic effect in their book title and its theme:

Because boss/subordinate interactions are the prototype of hierarchical relationship that go wrong, we've chosen *Don't Kill the Bosses!* as metaphorical title. Inspired by our take-off of the bloodier manifesto by Shakespeare, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the [bosses]" we say this while advocating the importance of hierarchy. But it's hierarchical *structure* we advocate, with synapses sufficiently wide to counter the gravitational forces of hierarchical, one-sided "you account to me," relationships.<sup>6</sup>

They conclude that bad bosses are wrecking the workplace:

Had we done a double-blind study, we couldn't be more convinced . . . boss/subordinate relationships constitutes the number one selling agent for tranquilizers, antacids, and beta-blockers and probably account for more people losing their jobs than market downturns and personnel incompetence. Even people who don't have a problem today will tell you about a terrible relationship they had with a boss . . . in the past.<sup>7</sup>

The normal setting for bad bosses is the business workplace, though they also exist as coaches, teachers, and clergy. But in any and every case, a boss can make or

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<sup>5</sup> Amazon.com reviewer "twicesoldtales" [pseud.], "So you'd like to . . . Kill Your Boss" (no posting date), <http://www.amazon.com/gp/richpub/syltguides/fullview/39R7CTFEVHB1B> (accessed August 16, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel A. Culbert and John B. Ullmen, *Don't Kill the Bosses! Escaping the Hierarchy Trap* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 160-61. Culbert and Ullmen note in their footnote (161), citing William Shakespeare, *Henry VI*, part II, act IV, scene II, that "Shakespeare used lawyers in his quote, not bosses."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., xi.

break your workplace setting. A common saying in the business world is, You join a company, but you leave a boss—meaning the company situation can be or seem to be wonderful, yet a bad boss can spoil the workplace.

### **Solutions**

Lots of literature focuses on employers and leadership. Published books in recent years address Christian views of work and the workplace. Yet, little writing focuses on employees—and there seems to be a lack of literature, from a biblical perspective, addressing the plight and problems of workers under a bad boss.

What principles can guide people in their roles as workers, subordinates, and direct reports? Does Scripture address the topic of employees and employers? If so, where does the Bible do so and with what insights and instruction? How are Christians to work and to relate in their workplace? Are there lessons learned in God’s Word applicable for us in the industrial, high-tech world of the twenty-first century? Do the Scriptures offer any pattern and principles that can guide those who labor in a bad boss setting?

The answer to the preceding questions is yes. Many passages in the Bible do apply to bosses and workers, or at least many texts suggest principles that can aid believers in their daily lives and relationships. While many pastors, theologians, and Christian authors exegete leadership lessons and management models from the Bible, not many extract wisdom for workers and employees from the Word. Yet, most congregants are workers, not CEOs or organizational managers. When employees become employers, they understand the labor-management relationship complexities because they have

worked as subordinates—especially under bad bosses—and they usually make better leaders and bosses themselves.

### **This Thesis-Project as an Approach**

A fascinating analysis of a bad boss in the Bible occurs in the unique, difficult, and perplexing relationship between the employee David and his employer King Saul. This is a dramatic story is about one leader who became a bad boss, and about an emerging, young leader and staff member who had a constantly inconsistent relationship with that boss. The David-Saul relationship is rich in employee-employer relational issues and relevant with insights for workers under a bad boss. Therefore, this D.Min. thesis-project focuses not on a leader but frames its study from the situation of a follower— a perspective not often studied, as Gardner notes: “There is a vast literature on the failures of leadership—on the abuse of power, injustice, indecisiveness, shortsightedness, and so on. Who will write the essay on individual and collective failures among followers?”<sup>8</sup>

Though it is not the essay on followership suggested by Gardner, this thesis touches on employees’ struggles and weaknesses. This work will focus on Christians working for a bad boss. It will address some of the employee issues, topics, and viewpoints from a contemporary culture perspective as well as from some Christian perspectives. Through a theological and biblical framework, it will analyze some literature on this subject. Finally, it will apply a portion of God’s Word to this problem in the workplace.

Through the next five chapters, this thesis-project will address, analyze, and apply four areas of investigation and inquiry about employees under difficult employers. The

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<sup>8</sup> John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press: 1990), 36.

practical result is a small-group Bible study curriculum on this problem. It examines an employee-employer relationship, that is, a bad boss scenario. It explores through individual study and group discussion sessions the problems and the principles from the unique David-Saul relationship in the Scripture. It seeks to show the Bible offers a great case study about working under a bad boss. A combination of academic research and a field-tested small-group curriculum centers on this theme: “A Small-Group Study Using the David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship to Explore Biblical Principles and Applications for Those Working under a Bad Boss.”

Two components form this thesis-project. First, it seeks to provide a conceptual basis, which is a theoretical and theological analysis of pertinent topics and related literature. This prospectus summarizes some aspects about bad boss leadership and elements for employee responses. Second, this thesis proposes a curriculum to explore biblical principles and practical applications from the David-Saul employee-employer relationship. This study is to be used both by individuals in personal reflection and by these same individual participants in a small-group discussion setting.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and its context, “Working Under a Bad Boss.” Bad bosses are a difficulty in today’s workplaces and for today’s workers. Many employees need support as they labor for long hours and in challenging conditions under bullying, brutal, and bad bosses. This is an issue that many people experience and that all can address—for their own sakes and/or for their coworkers’ sake. Other chapters of this thesis discuss this problem and develop a biblical approach to it.

Chapter 2 provides a theological, biblical, conceptual outline for research and reflection. How do Christians understand work and the workplace? Who is a bad boss,

and how does one behave? What response options exist for workers under abusive leaders? Do believers have a perspective different from coworkers about the workplace and their boss, even if that boss is terrible? Christians need a biblical and theological worldview about life and its issues (e.g., work), the workplace, and one's employee-employer relationship. Being knowledgeable about one's work environment and about one's bad boss is important. Likewise, analyzing and understanding the relationship with one's boss and employee-employer developmental phases is critical if improvements are to occur. Chapter 2 will address those topics.

Chapter 3 examines published literature and materials about bad bosses and workers under them, from the developed theological and biblical framework. What are characteristics of such bosses, and what response options exist for their employees? Spiritual ideas have entered today's workplaces, though these are not necessarily biblical; in fact, most are antithetical to Christianity. As Christian workers, we should understand these realities if we are to be successful and influential in our labor and for our Lord.

Chapter 4 details the project for this thesis. The Bible speaks about workers and owners, slaves and masters. Even better, it records a great saga about a staff member and his bad boss: the young warrior-leader David under the installed organizational leader King Saul. This relationship is the basis for an eleven-session Bible study. Chapter 4 gives this thesis-project's design, development, and methodology. This thesis-project is a small-group curriculum, for individual study five days a week and for group discussion once a week. Its focus is an exploration of biblical principles, patterns, and applications from the David-Saul interaction for people today who work under a bad boss.



Chapter 5 analyzes how the project worked. Evaluation of any project is essential to assess and improve it. This project was field-tested with Christians who were or who had been in bad boss workplace settings. Assessments compare and contrast participants' pre-study and post-study knowledge, and critique sheets collect their evaluations, comments, and suggestions. Statistical data and written feedback provided good assessment about the curriculum and its usefulness. Another evaluation tool was observation by the author as the group leader, on the participants' engagement and the curriculum's effectiveness.

Chapter 6 completes this thesis-project with an overall summary. Feedback data and information give a good critique of this effort. Lessons learned focus on leading the group participants and conducting the study curriculum. Possible or needed changes are considered as a prelude to using this small-group curriculum again. Some summary thoughts address this project's potential value to other Christians. Finally, out of this thesis and its accompanying project, several proposed workplace Bible study topics and texts emerge as possible future studies for employees and employers.

## **Conclusion**

Almost all people now work or have worked in a workplace. Most every worker has a boss, and most employees have an employer. In such job settings, many of us have had a difficult supervisor or an impossible employer—that is, a bad boss. This thesis-project will address that problem and consider some perspectives about how Christians serve under such bad bosses.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 1 explained the problem and setting for this thesis-project: working under a bad boss in the workplace. Chapter 2 now discusses core concepts that frame the analysis of this topic, and these concepts lead into the research reading summarized in chapter 3. Finally, these concepts provide foundations for developing a practical small-group study curriculum, explained in chapter 4.

Four biblical and theological concepts structure this study and its understanding of bad bosses and employees working under them. Encapsulating these four core concepts for this worker-boss study are four questions:

- (1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?
- (2) Who is a bad boss?
- (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?
- (4) Are there spiritual principles or any patterns for working under a bad boss?

The practical component of this thesis-project presents a small-group Bible discussion curriculum about David working under King Saul. That unique relationship is the best story in the Bible about an employee relating to a very difficult employer. Therefore, at the end of each core concept section below, a brief analysis of either Saul and/or David shows how they and they plus their interactions relate to the core concepts just discussed. Ideas from those analyses will lead into the project and guide its structure of themes and topics.

## **(1) How Are Christians to Understand Their Employment and Employer?**

Every Christian should have an understanding from God's Word about the reality of life generally and about relationships in living specifically. For decades, Christian writers, speakers, and pastors have addressed the concept of a world-life view. Only in recent years did the concept of a workplace view emerge. At their work, believers are called to serve well both their leaders and their Lord. Foundational to serving both faithfully requires thoughtful and biblical understanding about one's employment (i.e., work) and one's employer (i.e., boss).

### **Employment**

Work consumes most of our lives each year and throughout our lifetime. Employees may work a five-day week laboring forty to fifty or even sixty or more hours each week. With such a work schedule, at least one-third to one-half of one's life is "at work," and, over a sixty- to seventy-year period, two-thirds to three-fourths of our life is spent at our workplace. For this dominant element in our life, there is not one universally accepted viewpoint from business leaders, academic theorists, or Christians. It is doubtful that many workers have any philosophy or perspective about their work or their workplace, except they are there to earn wages and "make a living." But followers of the one who is "the way, the truth, and the life"<sup>1</sup> should have a spiritual view of their way in the workplace.

### **Cultural Perspectives**

For many people work is a grinding drudgery—a necessity by which they live and a burden under which they labor. In a fascinating collection of more than one hundred interviews with all types of employees, Studs Terkel produced a lengthy anthology in

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:6.

which American workers expressed their thoughts and feelings about their work and their workplace—mostly depressing and probably debilitating for those trying to do their jobs:

This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence—to the spirit as well as to the body. It is about ulcers as well as accidents, about shouting matches as well as fistfights, about nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around. It is, above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is triumph enough for the walking wounded among the great many of us.<sup>2</sup>

Work can become almost slavery and even additive, as common phrases state:

“She’s a slave to her work” and “He’s a workaholic.” Another book summarizes several studies about the workplace. It concludes the workplace is highly stressful and can be dangerous to health for an organization and for its workers:

The symptoms of high stress levels in American workers are pervasive. Employees, who enter the work force energized, optimistic, and eager to succeed, are being misled and harangued into helplessness by frustrations they cannot alleviate. . . .

Stress is highly contagious at work. Any employee can verify that it only takes one stressed-out office mate, particularly if it is the boss, to send the whole group into the stress stratosphere.<sup>3</sup>

### A Christian Perspective

The above descriptions are quite pessimistic and discouraging about work, workplaces for employees. However, the Bible and Christian faith offers a different perspective about work, one that is optimistic and motivating. In contrast to views reported by Terkel and by DeCarlo and Gruenfeld, a book by Bernbaum and Steer about biblical perspectives on work has a chapter of interviews with Christian workers who express their views about employment:

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<sup>2</sup> Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talking About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Donald T. DeCarlo and Deborah H. Gruenfeld, *Stress in the American Workplace: Alternatives for the Working Wounded* (Fort Washington, PA: LRP Publications, 1989), 54.

as a response to Terkel's sociological pessimism. Christians should have a distinctive view of the nature of work that is formed from an understanding of biblical principles. Such a perspective needs to be at least as honest as Terkel's treatment but can provide a more positive vision of working life based upon the principles outlined in previous chapters [of their book]—co-creativity and calling, service, and stewardship.

If Terkel's book was brilliant expose of the fallen nature of work, then the purpose of [these] interviews is to illustrate that in Christ, both work and worker can be redeemed.<sup>4</sup>

Work may be odious to many employees. But for Christians, it is God-ordained.

In the beginning, the Lord gave coworker and caretaker status over creation to the creatures made in God's image and likeness.<sup>5</sup> The creation commission to the humans was to rule over the other living creatures and subdue the earth.<sup>6</sup> Even after Adam and Eve disobey the Lord, God still expects them to work. The divine work assignment is not deleted, it is just more difficult—now toil and labor cause pain and perspiration.<sup>7</sup>

Ecclesiastes also affirms that believers should look to, trust in, and rely upon the divine—upon God—for our work perspective, perseverance, and peace:

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment. . . . Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, [and] to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John A. Bernbaum and Simon M. Steer, *Why Work? Careers and Employment in Biblical Perspective*, Marketplace '86 ed., Christian College Coalition Study Guides (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 2:15. Interestingly, in the New Testament, as God is making new creations in Christ and “reconciling the world to himself through Christ,” Christians are God's “fellow-workers” (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:1).

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 1:28.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1:26-28; 3:17-19.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 2:24-25; 5:19.

## Employer

### Cultural Perspectives

The labels and nicknames workers ascribe to their leaders communicate much about employee attitudes toward those bosses. In addition to using the designation “boss” even directly to the leader,<sup>9</sup> employees have other labels. For example, though not to the face of their boss or supervisor, workers use the term “the man” or “the old man.”<sup>10</sup> Terms and titles by which employees refer to their employers usually reveal the degree of respect or disrespect the former have for the latter.

Boss attitude and behavior greatly contribute to workers’ attitudes toward their leaders. The way bosses treat workers makes a great impact on how those employees respond. This is equally true in other employer-employee relationships, such as how a coach treats players or how a professor treats students. Until recently, most workplace feedback was top-down. A new method called the “upward appraisal” or “360 degree feedback” asks subordinates to critique their supervisors anonymously and thereby provide honest, no-pressure assessment of their employers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> During this author’s thirty years as a naval officer, senior officers were always addressed by the term “Sir” or “Ma’am” or by their rank, such as “Captain” or “Admiral.” But at the turn of this twenty-first century, some officers began referring to their commanding officer, sometimes even speaking to that leader directly, by using the term “Boss.” This was even to flag officers (i.e., Navy admirals and Marine Corps generals), which, from this writer’s perspective, is a bit disrespectful of any leader for whom one works.

<sup>10</sup> “The old man” is a term used over decades in the U.S. Navy for a ship’s commanding officer without malice or disrespect. Who knows whether its gender equivalent is used today if the commanding officer is a female: “old woman”?

<sup>11</sup> Harvey A. Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), 124-25. The U.S. Navy began using this leadership feedback method several years ago. This author received an email request for evaluation and comments via a leadership consulting company on a new U.S. Navy rear admiral with whom he had worked. An interesting exercise would be to ask congregants to give anonymous feedback about the leadership, preaching, pastoral care, outreach, worship leading, staff and team building, visioning, goal achievement, and community influence performed by their clergy leaders!

### A Christian Perspective

The Bible lists many different employments and work. In the Old Testament, workers serve their clan, their community, and later the nation of Israel. Other nations had similar divisions of labor for workers. Over time and human development, jobs included herdsmen,<sup>12</sup> farmers,<sup>13</sup> shipbuilders,<sup>14</sup> sailors and mariners,<sup>15</sup> kings,<sup>16</sup> caravan merchants,<sup>17</sup> monarchial staffs and guard corps,<sup>18</sup> government administrators,<sup>19</sup> bakers,<sup>20</sup> military personnel (e.g., soldiers, officers, and charioteers),<sup>21</sup> artisans,<sup>22</sup> musicians,<sup>23</sup> and stonecutters.<sup>24</sup> Scripture names many skilled jobs that men and women did to construct the tabernacle, its furniture, and the priests' garments.<sup>25</sup> About three hundred years later, people with many skills organized to accomplish one huge work project: building the temple.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the New Testament references a variety of work positions and employment jobs, such as fishermen,<sup>27</sup> tax collector,<sup>28</sup> soldier,<sup>29</sup> centurion,<sup>30</sup> tentmaker,<sup>31</sup> director of public works,<sup>32</sup> jailor,<sup>33</sup> proconsul (Roman leader),<sup>34</sup> businesswoman (dealer

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<sup>12</sup> Genesis 4:2, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 4:2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 6:14-22.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 107:23-32; Jonah 1:3-16.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 14:1-24.

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 37:25-28.

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 39:1.

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 41:41-45.

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 40:1.

<sup>21</sup> Exodus 14:6-9.

<sup>22</sup> Exodus 35:30-35.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Kings 5:15-18.

<sup>25</sup> Exodus 35:10—39:43.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Chronicles 22:15-17; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 7-8, 10, 12-14, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 5:1-15.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 9:9-11.

<sup>29</sup> Luke 23:11, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 23:47; Acts 10:1ff.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 18:3.

<sup>32</sup> Romans 16:23b.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 18:34; Acts 16:22-36.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 13:6-12; 18:12; 19:38.

in purple cloth),<sup>35</sup> and silversmith.<sup>36</sup> God's people, just like other people, labor in workplace jobs.

Yet within the workplaces of life, God is concerned for the weak or oppressed. Psalm 82 exhorts leaders to “defend the cause of the weak . . . maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.”<sup>37</sup> The author of Ecclesiastes ruminates on life's existential issues, including work. Though “oppressors” may be foreign occupiers, oppression can also come from bosses and masters within national and domestic workplaces settings:

What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night, his mind does not rest. . . . I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed—and that they have no comforter. Power was on the side of their oppressors—they have no comforter. . . . If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things.<sup>38</sup>  
But Ecclesiastes also affirms that men and women should look to, trust in, and

rely upon the divine—upon God—for our work perspective, perseverance, and peace:

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment. . . . Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, [and] to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.<sup>39</sup>

### **Vocation**

This thesis-project is less about work and vocation but more about the employee-employer relationship. Yet, along with considerations about employment and one's employer, the concept of vocation deserves some brief comments.

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<sup>35</sup> Acts 16:14.

<sup>36</sup> Judges 17:4; Proverbs 25:4; Acts 19:24.

<sup>37</sup> Psalm 82:3-4a.

<sup>38</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:22-23; 4:1; 5:8.

<sup>39</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; 5:19.



Vocation seems today to mean an individual's job, that is, where one works. The terms "vocation" and "career" seem blurred in our time. Yet, the word "vocation" comes from the Latin root for work, *vocare*, which means, "to call." The word "call/called" is used hundreds of time and many ways in Scripture. Vocation may be distinct from career; calling can mean several things biblically and theologically, as recent books point out in discussing work, calling, and vocation. In one of these books, Stevens speaks about the Lord's call for us to God and to service. He explains that Christian vocation is human vocation:

To enter into God's service [is] to fulfill his purposes in both the church and the world. This involves gifts, talents, ministries, occupations, roles, work, and mission. . . .

The Christian vocation summons us to take up the human vocation in its totality. We are not redeemed by Christ to become angels preparing for an immaterial heaven, but saved to become fully human beings serving God and God's purposes in the world through the church. So it is crucial to understand that for which we were originally formed and called by God.<sup>40</sup>

For this thesis-project, two categories summarize the concept of "calling": calling to the Lord and calling to a livelihood. Faith and work might be another method of describing these two concepts, as could worship and work or salvation and service. Scripture implies that these two concepts intertwined and commingled together—never separated, disconnected, compartmentalized, or polarized. That is, as the Lord is involved in blessing the work of our hands,<sup>41</sup> so simultaneously we are to be fearful of and working for the Lord.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 88.

<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy 2:7; 14:29; 15:10; 24:19; 28:12.

<sup>42</sup> Deuteronomy 16:15; Job 1:8-10.

First, God calls men and women in the Bible and in our day to salvation—back to the Lord God throughout the Old Testament<sup>43</sup> and to Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament.<sup>44</sup> Believing in and belonging to the Creator-Maker is the ultimate calling for every human creature—made in the image and likeness of God. The God-human connection and relationship is life itself.<sup>45</sup> This was true in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of creation. It is equally true since the human beings’ fall and separation from God. This is true in the Good News of Jesus Christ: he calls people back to God through himself.<sup>46</sup>

Second, God calls men and women to serve him<sup>47</sup> and to serve others.<sup>48</sup> Thus, our employment work should be a part of our “good works” that others might glorify our Father in heaven.<sup>49</sup> When by grace through faith people are reconciled, regenerated, and reconnected by our Creator God the Father through the Son and by the Spirit, then they are becoming “God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”<sup>50</sup>

### **David and Saul**

David seems to have a relationship with God as a young shepherd boy, as others said, “The Lord is with him.”<sup>51</sup> When David responded to the military and political crisis of Goliath confronting the army of Israel, he expressed his faith. His concern was that

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<sup>43</sup> Psalm 95:6-11; Isaiah 44:22; Jeremiah 3:11-15.

<sup>44</sup> John 14:6; Romans 10:1-13.

<sup>45</sup> John 10:10; 17:3.

<sup>46</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

<sup>47</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12; 11:13; Joshua 22:5; 24:15-24; Psalm 2:11; Matthew 4:10.

<sup>48</sup> Mark 10:35-45; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 6:7.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 5:16.

<sup>50</sup> Ephesians 2:8-10. Paul outlines divides several of his epistles into two halves: salvation and service or faith and works. He discusses theological constructs and then practical concepts—first divine redemption and then human relationships (e.g., Romans 1-11 and 12-16; Ephesians 1-3 and 4-6; Colossians 1-2 and 3-4). Peter organizes his first letter in a similar structure: first teaching about new birth and salvation in Jesus Christ plus being holy as God’s chosen people (1 Peter 1:1—2:12), and then explaining proper relationship with each other (3:13—5:14). Faith and work apply to worship places and to workplace.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Samuel 16:18.

Goliath “should defy the armies of the living God,”<sup>52</sup> and David’s confidence was that “the Lord who delivered me from the paw of lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”<sup>53</sup> He challenged Goliath, calling out with a confession of faith in the Lord God: “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty. . . . This day the Lord will had you over to me . . . it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord’s.”<sup>54</sup>

When called to the new king’s staff, David served Saul as an employed harp player.<sup>55</sup> His service for his boss expanded as he became “one of the armor-bearers”<sup>56</sup> and received “a high rank in the army” of Saul.<sup>57</sup> He was faithful and effective in his service, not rushing into what God had already ordained—that he would be Saul’s successor. As their employee-employer interaction went from strain to stress, from Saul’s harassing David to his hunting down his young leader to kill him, David left the king’s presence. But he did not seek to subvert the king’s person or position, for he believed his employer was “the Lord’s anointed.”<sup>58</sup>

David experienced both these calls from God: first to the Lord and second to a vocational work. Exactly when and how David “first called upon the name of the Lord” and “came to know the Lord”<sup>59</sup> is unknown. However, when Samuel anointed young David as the future king of Israel, “the spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 1 Samuel 17:26.

<sup>53</sup> 1 Samuel 17:37.

<sup>54</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45-47.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Samuel 16:16ff.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Samuel 16:21.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6; 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Samuel 1:14.

<sup>59</sup> Compare Abram in Genesis 12:8 and 13:4 as well as Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:7.

<sup>60</sup> 1 Samuel 16:13.

Thus, David was first a shepherd and a harp player who knew “the living God.”<sup>61</sup> Then he became a victorious champion against Goliath<sup>62</sup> and a hero-warrior for the new nation of Israel and under its new king.<sup>63</sup> In his personal faith and in his professional work, David had God’s calling and confirmation. He combined well both his call to faith and his call to work.

## **(2) Who Is a Bad Boss?**

There are many books now published about the bad bosses, brutal bosses, bully bosses, idiot bosses, and other such title descriptors—and how to work for them.<sup>64</sup> Descriptions of a bad boss are plentiful and much easier than determining a simple definition. Yet grappling for a definition leads toward descriptions, which can assist our understanding about some characteristics of this type of leader.

### **Definition**

First, it is important to discuss what a bad boss is not. A supervisor who requires hard work and expects results is not necessarily a bad boss. Clearly, there are major differences in a demanding leader versus a demeaning one, or a hard manager compared with a harsh one. A tough boss is different from an abusive boss. An ineffective boss is not necessarily an intolerable one.

So then, who is or what is a bad boss? Can a clear, concise definition be determined? Several authors give a definition or, more usually, offer a concise description of a bad boss. Mueller suggests a definition of “bully bosses” that fits the workplace setting:

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<sup>61</sup> 1 Samuel 16:11, 14-23; 17:26, 37.

<sup>62</sup> 1 Samuel 17.

<sup>63</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5-7.

<sup>64</sup> See the bibliography under “Bad Bosses and Working for Them.”

To facilitate managerial efforts to remedy bullying in the workplace, a business definition is called for. It must be narrowly crafted in operational terms rather than in the external constructs of law, psychoanalysis, or medicine. For these purposes, a Bully is an employee with supervisory authority who deviates from the employer's designated mission, with behaviors having the appearance of pursuing an independent mission [his or her own] to secure power or control over a subordinate employee by means regarded by the general community as anti-social.<sup>65</sup>

Although their focus is not just on bosses alone but any coworker or person who is a bully in the workplace and those they bully (i.e., bullies and their targets), Namie and Namie give this summary description that is quite applicable to workplace supervisors and bosses:

Bullying at work is the repeated, malicious verbal mistreatment of a Target (the recipient) by a harassing bully (the perpetrator) driven by the bully's desire to control the Target. That control is typically a mixture of cruel acts of deliberate humiliation or interference and the withholding of resources and support preventing the Target from succeeding at work. The most important defining characteristic is that the bully's actions damage the Target's health and self-esteem, relations with family and friends, economic livelihood, or some combination of them all.<sup>66</sup>

### **Descriptions**

Authors addressing this workplace problem create various lists for types or categories of bad bosses. Here is one example of some descriptive titles with a short explanation of that label.

Hoover lists seven types.<sup>67</sup> "God bosses" think they are Napoleon Bonaparte, act like megalomaniacs, and speak as if they are the voice from the burning bush. Most often they appear in church or religious settings. "Machiavellian bosses" do not think they are

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<sup>65</sup> Robert Mueller, *Bullying Bosses: A Survivor's Guide—How to Transcend the Illusion of the Interpersonal* (San Francisco: BullyingBosses.com, 2005), 28.

<sup>66</sup> Gary Namie and Ruth Namie, *The Bully at Work: What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity On the Job* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2000), 3.

<sup>67</sup> John Hoover, *How to Work for an Idiot: Survive and Thrive—Without Killing Your Boss* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2004), 37-59.

God, for they are quite intelligent and know better; highly focused and driven, their goal is get to the top no matter what. “Masochistic bosses” give punishment and woe; they attract codependent workers, trying unsuccessfully to fill the souls of these bosses who never feel good about themselves or anyone else. “Sadistic bosses” revel in teasing and torturing with criticism, sarcasm, and more work. They take pleasure in causing pain. “Paranoid bosses” are sure everyone, including their employees, is out to get them; they see conspiracies everywhere, and their false fears can become self-fulfilling prophecies. “Buddy bosses” want to join at the hip and hang with employees, even if they have to relax deadlines or workloads; they need lots of emotional and personal attachment. “Idiot bosses” are clueless; unlike the above bosses, they are not threatening or unpleasant but have no idea about the organization, people, leading, or what is happening.

Authors develop creative, unique name designations for bad bosses—and for their book titles. Here are some samples of bad boss names and descriptors. Carter lists these categories of nasty bosses: carrot dangler, two-face, peoplesuck boss, crusader, chunky boss, enmeshes, violator, invalidator, noper, anal-izer, meme boss, mood, and nasty female bosses.<sup>68</sup> Mann, in her concise and insightful book, *Managing Your Boss*,<sup>69</sup> discusses bosses from two perspectives: leading and thinking. Her six boss leadership styles are dictatorial, bureaucratic, charismatic, consultative, laissez-faire, and abdicatorial. Her eight boss thinking styles are detail-conscious, big-chunk, left-brain, right-brain, reactive, good tips. Lang uniquely uses the twelve signs of the astrological

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<sup>68</sup> Jay Carter, *Nasty Bosses: How to Stop Being Hurt by Them without Stooping to Their Level* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 5-18.

<sup>69</sup> Sandi Mann, *Managing Your Boss*, Barron’s Education Series, A Business Success Guide (Hauppauge, NY: Barron’s, 2001), 12-26.

zodiac in *Bosstrology*, to describe twelve bad boss types and how employees might respond to each of them.<sup>70</sup>

So, who or what is a bad boss? Carter combines his effort to define such a boss with several descriptions, characteristics, and qualities in comparison with and in contrast to good bosses.

In order to define the nasty boss, we almost have to contrast a good boss . . . [with] a chart of nasty qualities and the contrasting good qualities. Don't forget, real life won't be as black and white as this. These are polarized models:

<b>Nasty Boss</b>	<b>Good Boss</b>
Dominates	Encourages
Blames others	Shares responsibility
Alienates	Welcomes
Hovers	Shows interest
Intimidates	Makes people feel at ease
Instills fear	Instills confidence
Speaks—doesn't listen	Listens
Threatens	Protects
Is egotistical	Has good self-esteem
Is arrogant	Shows humility
Has sense of entitlement	Has sense of purpose
Commands fear	Commands respect
May be intelligent, not wise	Is wise
Sees only what he/she wants	Sees overall picture
Introverts people with self-doubt	Brings out best in people
Disrespects	Respects <sup>71</sup>

Bing summarizes “crazy bosses” as bully, paranoid, narcissist, bureaucrazy, and disaster hunter.<sup>72</sup> He says these descriptions are not as much as separate, individual bosses but rather characteristics in each bad boss, “five separate portions of the mind of the crazy boss.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Adele Lang, *Bosstrology: The Twelve Bastard Bosses of the Zodiac* (London: Kyle Cathie Limited, 2004).

<sup>71</sup> Carter, *Nasty Bosses*, 1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Stanley Bing, *Crazy Bosses: Spotting Them, Serving Them, Surviving Them* (New York: William Morrow, 1992), 100-266.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

As mentioned above, defining a bad boss is not easy. After his five descriptors,

Bing provides a concluding summary about descriptions and types:

So these are five “types” of bosses, right? Wrong. There is no such thing, in my opinion, as a “type” of boss. There is only the crazy boss himself with plumes of behavior rocketing into the environment, all of it fueled by the same illness, the etiology. . . .

And while I may speak at times as if your boss is exclusively one “type” or another, this is done merely of convenience. Remember the true crazy boss is a stewpot of bad behavior. Recognizing which part of his anarchic soul you are confronting is half the battle.

The other half is up to you.<sup>74</sup>

In summary, describing a bad boss is not hard, but defining one is. But any abused employee is quite clear in identifying such a supervisor:

Regarding the article “Down and Out on the Job” (June 2003 [*Psychology Today*]), it doesn’t take a workplace study to discover how negative supervisors can be toxic. I experienced this several years ago. And it took years before this young woman was finally fired. I will never allow another person to treat me like a rug. By not speaking up, I was trading my self-worth for a paycheck.<sup>75</sup>

### **Is the Problem a Bad Boss?**

However, is the bad boss always the workplace culprit? There is a caveat to identifying a bad boss. Maybe, just maybe, the bad boss is not really the problem!

Sometimes you think you’ve got a bad boss when the real problem is that you are a bad employee, but don’t know it. This may be particularly true if you have a series of complaints about bad bosses, and the conflicts show a pattern—or the bosses make similar complaints about you. . . .

In short, don’t just chalk up your work problems to having a bad boss, especially when the problems keep occurring in different setting and different types of jobs. The real problem may not be the bad boss—it might be you! If so, work on fixing yourself rather than trying to come up with ways to deal with a bad boss who isn’t really that bad.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Bing, *Crazy Bosses*, 92, 99.

<sup>75</sup> Helen Tanguis, “Bad Boss Feedback,” email reply, *Psychology Today* 39 no. 5 (September-October 2003): 23.

<sup>76</sup> Scott, *Survival Guide for Working with Bad Bosses*, 177, 181.



Therefore, before workers decide their workplace problem is a bad boss, they should seek out second and third opinions. Coworkers' opinions and perceptions are important and probably more objective than those of the upset worker. Questions to others might be these: What do these colleagues think of this boss? What have been their experiences with this boss? How is their interaction and rapport with this boss?

### **David and Saul**

Saul had many abilities and attributes. He was from a prominent family; his father was “a man of standing” and owned livestock.<sup>77</sup> Saul had physical presence, for he was impressive and taller than others.<sup>78</sup> He was responsible as a son and assisted his father.<sup>79</sup> There is no indication he was unfaithful to his wife or had more than one wife.<sup>80</sup> Saul gets good marks as a father, based upon the integrity and moral character of his son Jonathan, who was loyal to his fellow soldiers, to his great friend David, and to his father, with whom he fought and died.<sup>81</sup> The king also planned well militarily; he led his troops into battle and to some victories.<sup>82</sup> As he became king, he was gracious to some critics.<sup>83</sup> God called Saul to serve the Lord and Israel. By this call and commissioning through Samuel, the Spirit changed Saul's heart and empowered him for his new work.<sup>84</sup>

However, as a national leader and staff supervisor, Saul had problems. His judgment in situations and obedience to guidance given him wavered.<sup>85</sup> With a key employee, one of his young rising leaders, David, Saul became a bad boss—even a brutal

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<sup>77</sup> 1 Samuel 9:1.

<sup>78</sup> 1 Samuel 9:2; 10:23.

<sup>79</sup> 1 Samuel 9:3-10; 10:2.

<sup>80</sup> 1 Samuel 14:50.

<sup>81</sup> 1 Samuel 19:1-6; 20:1-42; 31:1-6.

<sup>82</sup> 1 Samuel 11:1-11; 14:47-48.

<sup>83</sup> 1 Samuel 10:27; 11:12-13.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Samuel 10:9-11.

<sup>85</sup> 1 Samuel 13:7b-14.

boss. As David's success and reputation surpassed those of his employer, King Saul became angry, jealous, and even afraid of David. So, the king tries directly and then indirectly to kill his young superstar.<sup>86</sup> One moment Saul is being soothed by David's musical skills; the next minute he is strident because of David's military successes and tries to spear his new harp player. Later, when David dialogued with Saul, the king acknowledged he had treated David badly; yet soon thereafter Saul again went hunting for David.<sup>87</sup> Saul's personality and leadership, with his inconsistent following the Lord spiritually, made him a boss who was mercurial and manic-depressive, especially toward David, who was trying to work under and for him.

### **(3) What Is the Employee's Developmental Relationship with a Bad Boss?**

Interpersonal relationships are never static, but they are dynamic and always changing. This is true in life, and it is true in the workplace. To think one is just hired and that is it, is not only naïve and foolish but may result in the employee failing or even being fired. The employee-employer relationship continuously evolves over time, through job performance and by interpersonal interaction.

#### **Developmental Phases**

Workers should recognize the development aspects of their relationship with their Supervisor, especially if they are working under a bad boss. This thesis-project postulates that difficult employee-employer relationships have six developmental phases: start, success, stress, support, selection, and successor. Start includes job interviews and hiring or promotion. Success is good work performance and achievement. Stress occurs as friction, conflict, and even animosity develop with one's supervisor, who is or becomes a

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<sup>86</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5-15.

<sup>87</sup> 1 Samuel 24:8-21; 26:2-3.

bad boss. Support is needed and critical for employees from a friend, colleague, or confidante for advice and verification about situation. Selection is the phase when an employee must consider and chose response options in the bad boss situation. Finally, the successor phase is when a boss leaves the workspace relationship and the employee may succeed the boss, thus returning to the start employee-employer phase.

Frequently these phases are more or less sequential in one's workplace, that is, they periodically repeat themselves in the relationship with a boss. However, they can also occur irregularly or out of phase. For example, phase three (stress) may follow phase one (start) without much of or any phase two (success). Or, phases one through three (start, success, stress) might occur and reoccur several times before the employee realizes a bad boss situation exists and needs to address phase four (support) and possibly soon phase five (selection). Granted, not every worker will become a boss, but most everyone does succeed someone in a leadership role (successor), even if very small, such as a social club officer, a sports team assistant coach, or children's program leader. Then these phases restart.

Everyone employed will experience most, if not all, of these six developmental relationship phases in their workplace with their boss: start, success, stress, support, selection, and successor.

### Start

Start is the phase of interviewing, hiring, and bringing aboard a new worker. Sometimes employees rise within their company, because of years of experience and good work. Other times, a person is hired from outside the organization. Some of those promoted were expected to take new and expanded roles or responsibilities; for others,

the new job is a total surprise. Joshua moved up as a leader within the young nation of Israel, succeeding his boss Moses.<sup>88</sup> Gideon, by contrast, worked in a wheat threshing area when called by God to a new job.<sup>89</sup> Saul, chosen by God through Samuel, interviewed with the prophet and some other community religious leaders before officially starting his job.<sup>90</sup> Solomon succeeded his father, David, as king of Israel. Some laborers have long tenure; others are hired for only a short period.<sup>91</sup> Jesus called followers, not from the religious leadership circles but from the ordinary workplaces of life, such as fishing<sup>92</sup> and tax collecting.<sup>93</sup>

### Success

Success occurs when a new employee—ideally, sooner than later on the job—accomplishes a hard task well, completes an assignment well, or initiates something beneficial for the organization. Gideon, a surprise pick for God’s work, started with a small success<sup>94</sup> and then had a large one as he defeated the Midianites.<sup>95</sup> Jeroboam was successful and promoted under King Solomon over all the labor force.<sup>96</sup> Although he had not performed well at the start, a middle manager in Jesus’ parable of the shrewd manager made a shrewd and successful financial policy with customers who owed the boss money, which greatly impressed his boss.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Deuteronomy 31:7-8; Joshua 1:1-5.

<sup>89</sup> Judges 6:11-16.

<sup>90</sup> 1 Samuel 9:14-10:1.

<sup>91</sup> Matthew 20:1-16.

<sup>92</sup> Luke 5:1-15.

<sup>93</sup> Matthew 9:9-11.

<sup>94</sup> Judges 6:25-35.

<sup>95</sup> Judges 7:1-25.

<sup>96</sup> 1 Kings 11:26-28.

<sup>97</sup> Matthew 16:1-12.

## Stress

Stress can commence when the employee is not so successful and/or when the employer is unhappy or upset for some reason, professional or personal, at the employee or not. Misunderstandings, miscommunications, and misperceptions cause strains. Unless they are identified and acknowledged, strains easily and quickly lead into stress in the employee-employer relationship.

After Gideon's successful defeat of the Midianites, others questioned this new leader, and the men of Succoth became jealous and adversarial, causing stressful tensions to develop. Though he was not working for the temple priests, Uzziah developed a stressful relationship with them. He was a very successful king of Judah, militarily victorious and administratively expansive. But Uzziah also became prideful. He usurped the priests' role by entering the temple sanctuary to burn incense himself. The priests became livid at his actions, and Uzziah became leprous—excluded from the temple and isolated from the nation for the rest of his life.<sup>98</sup> Earlier in biblical history and after young Jeroboam was promoted by King Solomon, the prophet Ahijah proclaimed Jeroboam would be king of Israel—having ten of twelve tribes torn loose from the united monarchy of Solomon, who then sought to kill his employee.<sup>99</sup>

When their relationship with their boss develops and increases with stress, employees and workers begin to realize they may be in a bad boss situation. Now they must reflect on it, analyze it, and understand it better before considering and deciding their response option. Understanding a situation's reality may lead to more realistic and beneficial solutions. The converse is true: not to comprehend the problem and its setting

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<sup>98</sup> 2 Chronicles 26:1-21.

<sup>99</sup> 1 Kings 11:26-40.

will probably lead to poor response solutions. In all situations but especially when under stress, every employee needs workplace understanding in four areas: your organization, your boss as employer, yourself as employee, and your relationship with your boss.

### *Your Organization*

The topic here is different from the earlier discussion about employment. That focus was on work itself, on employment. This section addresses the organizational structure in which an employee works (e.g., the company). To be effective in any group, one must understand its past formation and its present composition. Every organization has a culture that is a way of operating, a way of talking, a way of thinking, even a way of having fun. As Bellman wisely advises,

Many of us work for organizations that have been around a long time. In some cases, generations; in others, a few years. In all cases, the people there worked hard to make the organization what it is today. They invested their minds, hearts, and hands in making this organization work. Ignore that history at your peril; respect that history and you will increase your chances of success.<sup>100</sup>

As Fahlman expresses it in his humorous look at the workplace, “Determine early the organization’s sport. Playing tennis when the in-sport is golf can be a career threatening miscalculation.”<sup>101</sup>

Most organizations offer some type of company orientation for new employees. This presentation can introduce the organization’s vision and goals, its history and development, its functional operations, its organizational structure, its leadership. If this assimilation process is comprehensive, new hires learn about not only their department or

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<sup>100</sup> Geoffrey M. Bellman, *Getting Things Done When You Are Not in Charge* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 130-31.

<sup>101</sup> Clyde Fahlman, *Laughing Nine to Five: The Quest for Humor in the Workplace* (Portland, OR: Steelhead Press, 1997), 132.

section but also other divisions of the company and how they all operate together for common purposes.

Esther was queen, yet she knew the political realities of her status before the king. She could not barge in and say to her husband, “Honey, I’d like a favor from you concerning these Jewish people in our nation and a recent governmental policy about them.” She, as a woman, had to have permission to approach the king on his throne, indicated by the king extending his royal gold scepter.<sup>102</sup>

Paul knew government and political systems, in local environments and in the Roman Empire, and he worked his witness for the gospel, justice, and righteousness within the secular structures. He demanded the local officials of Philippi come to him, a Roman citizen in jail, to apologize and to release him from his no-trial imprisonment in their city.<sup>103</sup> So he could testify for Jesus Christ in Rome,<sup>104</sup> he used his status as a Roman citizen to appeal his false arrest up the chain of command to the big boss, Caesar—all along the way being a witness to Jesus Christ and the good news of the gospel.<sup>105</sup> Paul worked his way to the center of the Roman Empire, where he spent at least two years preaching and teaching the gospel.<sup>106</sup>

### *Your Boss as Employer*

This section addresses understanding the employer as an individual and as a person, whereas the preceding section looked at the employer’s position. If one works under a bad boss, then seek to understand that person. Mann observes, “Research suggests that managers generally have a particular psychological makeup, and

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<sup>102</sup> Esther 4:10—5:8.

<sup>103</sup> Acts 16, especially 16:37-39.

<sup>104</sup> Acts 23:11.

<sup>105</sup> Acts 25:11-12, 21; 26:32; 27:23; 28:19.

<sup>106</sup> Acts 28:30.

appreciating this will help you understand what drives and motivates them and what makes them tick.”<sup>107</sup> Mann’s first two chapters titles focus on knowing your supervisor: “What Kind of Animal Is the ‘Boss’?” and “What Type of Boss Do You Have?”

Elijah knew King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, under whose reign he lived. So, he was wise about when, where, why, how, and even if he dealt with them. After success through God’s power to defeat the Baal prophets whom King Ahab and Jezebel supported, Elijah fled fearfully for his safety away from this evil couple.<sup>108</sup>

The prophet Micaiah understood Ahab as king. When summoned before the king, he even commenced his conversation sarcastically with a “yes-man” statement because the king did not like to receive bad predictions or prophesies. The prophet knew the king’s authoritative position, and he knew his ungodly attitudes. Yet Micaiah was willing, if the king really wanted honest advice, “to tell nothing but the truth.”<sup>109</sup>

Even King David’s prophet, Nathan, was wise and wily about approaching the king after David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for her husband to be killed in battle. Nathan did not confront the king by saying, “Sir, you just broke 20% of the Lord’s key commandments! Shame on you.” Rather, he appealed to the heart of David, who was a former shepherd, and told him a parable about a young ewe lamb taken from its owner by a powerful rich man, which poignantly revealed to David his sins.<sup>110</sup>

Jesus understood power in his day, both political and religious. He knew the positions and the personalities of the high priest, Caiaphas, and the Roman governor, Pontus Pilate. He was aware of the deceptive intent of the Jewish authorities to eliminate

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<sup>107</sup> Mann, *How to Manage Your Boss*, iv.

<sup>108</sup> 1 Kings 18-19.

<sup>109</sup> 1 Kings 22:16.

<sup>110</sup> 2 Samuel 12:1-13.



him by false accusations. He also comprehended the political pressures that would overwhelm Pilate's attempt to be fair and objective with him.<sup>111</sup>

*You as Employee*

Workers should seek to understand their organizational position, not just to stay in our place—though a bad boss may demand that—but to be productive in a job and for the company. Employees are most effective in interrelationships and job performance when they grasp both company structures and office politics. The latter may not be official, but it is reality. Employees who understand their workplace environment can integrate better as a team member and as a productive worker. Hochheiser expresses the reality of give-and-take relationships:

It took me years to realize that . . . politics is also inescapable fact of life. Supervisors and colleagues in any workplace will give you a hard time if you are not prepared to “play ball” with them and reach compromises. . .

I have learned since my early management experiences that I can't avoid politics. You can't avoid it either. And you don't stand a chance of meeting your career goals if you don't understand how politics works and how to use it to your advantage to keep others from using it to put you down.<sup>112</sup>

In addition to understanding how one fits into the organization, employees need to know clearly the expectations their boss has for them. What are the employee's roles and responsibilities as well as tasks and functions? Sometimes these are not clear, either to the worker or possibly even in the mind of the supervisor. However, if goals are not delineated, no one will know if they are ever met, even though a boss may get upset because, in his mind, results were not reached.

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<sup>111</sup> Matthew 26:47-27:44 and parallel texts in the other three Gospel accounts.

<sup>112</sup> Robert M. Hochheiser, *How to Work for a Jerk: Your Success Is the Best Revenge* (New York: Vintage, 1987), 121, 123.

As employees work to understand their supervisors, Hochheiser suggests four ways to figure out what a boss wants:

(1) Ask and answer “What do I get out of it?” Keep in mind, however, that the “I” in the question is your boss—not you. . . . (2) Ask him what he wants. (3) Test him . . . first attempt to assess correctly, what is expected of you. . . . [and] (4) Observe him over a period of time and under a variety of circumstances.<sup>113</sup>

### *Your Relationship with Your Boss*

As explained above, an employee under a bad employer should try to ascertain and discern why their workplace relationship is bad. Once employees have some understanding of their boss and of the organizational in which they work, then they can analyze their response options. In hopes of improving the boss-worker interaction, the employee must take the initiative. Maybe the boss does not understand the employee or the employee’s attitudes and actions. With a goal of being understood better by their bosses, employees should seek to understand their supervisors. The so-called peace prayer of St. Francis insightfully petitions God concerning life relationships and is applicable to organizational employee-employer situations: “O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love.”<sup>114</sup>

To review a point cited previously: no worker should immediately assume that a bad employee-employer relationship is absolutely, without doubt, the boss’s fault. In most conflicts or tense interpersonal relationships, both persons contribute to the problem in some way; rarely is one individual 100 percent wrong or right. Maybe the worker’s approach is not good—and maybe the person does not even realize this. Many bosses

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<sup>113</sup> Hochheiser, *How to Work for a Jerk*, 17-18.

<sup>114</sup> Franciscan Archive Organization (no posting date given), <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/patriarcha/peace.html> (accessed September 9, 2007).

sense or think they sense poor attitudes. True or not, a supervisor's perceptions become the reality, so employees must discern this and deal with those perceptions of their boss.

Who can change or initiate improvement in such employer-employee disharmony? What is a worker to do when the relationship with the boss is bad? Hoover advises, "Your success when working with difficult peers and difficult people in positions of power all comes down to attitude—yours."<sup>115</sup> Carter, who retired from management after twenty-six years and who then became a therapist for twenty-five years, explains his own abusive experience and resultant insight:

At one point in my life, it seemed I was surrounded by invalidators. People would put me down constantly—my boss, my professor, my significant other. I was sinking lower and lower and "they" were doing it to me. . . . My self-esteem was shot. The more I spiraled downward, the more people joined the bandwagon. Even my peers at work were joining my evil boss in the carping criticism and cruel jokes at my expense. I was stressed out. These dirty rotten people kept putting me down and making me miserable, and then some "jerk" tired to tell me *I* was responsible for it. Hah!

But as insane as it sounded to my cognitive mentality, my "big picture" self saw some truth in it. . . . Once I took responsibility for it, the invalidation stopped. I started asking questions I had never asked before like, "What might *I* be doing to cause this?"

Are you willing to take responsibility for your nasty boss? . . . What are you doing to cause your boss to be nasty?<sup>116</sup>

### Support

After the start, success, and stress phases of an employee-employer developmental relationship, support is the next phase. Under stress with the boss, the employee needs a friend, a confidante, and/or a counselor to offer objective, wise feedback and to give support during this trying time. Horn points out the criticality of such support:

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<sup>115</sup> Hoover, *How to Work for an Idiot*, 29.

<sup>116</sup> Carter, *Nasty Bosses*, 107-9.

Do you have friends to turn to if someone's turned on you? Friends can be your saving grace if you're unlucky enough to find your self in a nightmarish situation. Friends can assure you that you're not crazy and you're not alone. This is especially important because bullies tell us repeatedly that *we're* crazy. This intent is to make us doubt our sanity so we're more susceptible to their propaganda. . . .

It can be a daunting task to take on a tyrant. Most of us have no desire to destroy a fellow human being and we're devastated that someone's trying to do it to us. Furthermore, it's hard to match the obsessive zeal of a bully who's doing his or her best to debilitate us. Leaning on friends is a way of tapping into their strength.<sup>117</sup>

### Selection

Selection of options available to the worker is the next stage. Once a worker laboring under a bad boss acquires some understanding of the situation, that person has a foundation upon which to study possible response options and to select one. What response choices does the employee have? Which one seems best to select, based upon option pros and cons plus probable and unintended consequences? How will this choice be carried out? The bully or bad boss books suggest many employee approaches, behaviors, and interactions for each bad boss type. Horn summarizes some choices in this way: Shall I look away, fire away, or walk away?<sup>118</sup>

The various choices available to an employee whose workplace boss is bad summarize well into these four concepts: defeat, defiance, dialogue, and departure. After God called him to lead his people out of abusive oppression, Moses tried these four options in his relationship with Pharaoh, as mentioned briefly below. David, too, will have these options in his bad relationship with Saul.

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<sup>117</sup> Sam Horn, *Take the Bully by the Horns: Stop Unethical, Uncooperative, or Unpleasant People from Running and Ruining Your Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002) 245, 247.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 144.

### Defeat

The first option an employee can select is a passive one: look away and do nothing. Whether people are so low in self-confidence, so lacking about their worker rights, or so leery of any confrontation or consequences of taking action, they often do nothing to counter or to change their difficult workplace situation. No decision or a delayed decision, is a decision for status quo and one in which the employee remains in a defeated status. One choice for a mistreated employee is to be passive and defeated or be aggressive and defiant; as Horn says, to “ostrich-cize or ostracizing” one’s self.<sup>119</sup> To do nothing is to be defeated, in your work attitude and in your workplace actuality.

This approach will not only paralyze the worker in a bad situation but also will empower, enable, and embolden the bad boss to continue or to expand such abusive behavior. Conflicts and abuse, even if small when they start, must be confronted. Speaking of conflicts in the workplace, which include those of boss-workers and even those seemingly to be less significant, Randall points out “that to ignore conflict simply because its causes may seem to be trivial is to allow it to take hold within the organization and give the opportunity to perpetuate itself.”<sup>120</sup> Johnson advises,

Companies and Bosses who . . . take advantage of their workers will test the waters first. An example might be that your boss suddenly announces all employees will have to work on Saturday, when there is a need.

If the employees accept the order without question, the message the boss and the company receive is that of employee acceptance. The company and the boss will quickly come to expect compliance and will have little reservation about ordering a Sunday work rule, when they determine a need for it.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Horn, *Take the Bully by the Horns*, 143.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Randall, *Adult Bullying: Perpetrators and Victims* (Reprint ed., New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 131.

<sup>121</sup> Gerald L. Johnson, *Bad Bosses, Bad Jobs, Fight Back!* 3rd ed. (N.p.: Western Star Publications LLC, 2000), 27.

Randall notes bully bossing can produce deficits and weaknesses in employees, causing

individuals or groups to function maladaptively such that they may become oppressed [with] four deficits: *alienation*—a feeling or reality of being on the edges of mainstream community life . . . *learned helplessness*—in which an individual or group becomes excessively dependent on other people . . . *locus of control*— the perception held by individuals that their lives are entirely controlled by external events or agencies . . . [and] *social-structural disability*—impact on individuals or groups that they do not have the means of asserting themselves despite the will to do so.<sup>122</sup>

The Hebrews in Egypt under Pharaoh were in a defeated position and posture.

They were an oppressed hard-labor force in Egypt,<sup>123</sup> suffering under oppressive bosses and slave drivers,<sup>124</sup> and without any advocate or leader until the Lord God called Moses.<sup>125</sup> They were hopeless because they were powerless. They could not and did not resist their oppressors.

### Defiance

This second option is at one end of the fight-flight polarity. In this case, one may decide to defy, challenge, or fire away at the boss figuratively. This should not mean to sabotage one's work or company. Nevertheless, it does mean an employee takes a confrontational approach and action or at least this attitude, "I'll show him!" The individual may likely develop an antagonistic mindset against the person who is being abusive. The worker may or may not approach the bad boss about the conflict and tension. If such a meeting occurs, defiance in approach and attitude rarely produces good changes or improved relationship with a boss. To decide upon defiance requires thorough thinking about this choice.

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<sup>122</sup> Randall, *Adult Bullying*, 150-52.

<sup>123</sup> Exodus 2:11.

<sup>124</sup> Exodus 3:7.

<sup>125</sup> Exodus 3:7-10.

Yet if the boss behavior is so bad that something must be done, this is one response. It may occur in the format of a meeting with the boss. It may develop into an organized group intervention with the boss or the boss's boss. It may lead an employee to the human resources department to get legal advice. It might even result in a lawsuit and filing some charges to a judicial court. Yet when the reactive impulse is to fire away, Horn warns, "look before you bleep."

A friend told me a chilling story of a senior bank officer who didn't look before he bleeped. This executive returned from a week-long professional meeting to discover the bank president had publicly accused him of malingering. Even though his time away had been approved and covered, the CEO had announced that he was off on a boondoggle. The bank officer decided this couldn't go unchallenged. He went into the president's office to complain and was fired on the spot. . . .

The rash words of one minute undid a thirty-year career. . . . What's the moral of this story? Know the personality of the person you're dealing with and anticipate consequences before inserting foot in mouth.<sup>126</sup>

Moses, in non-revolutionary but resistive manner, defied his boss Pharaoh through the power of God. First, Aaron's staff "swallowed up" the staffs of court magicians.<sup>127</sup> Then, powerful plagues on Pharaoh and his people produced the Israelites' release.<sup>128</sup>

### Dialogue

This third option is the employee talking with the employer, that is, dialogue about the problem. If there has clearly been conflict, it needs to be recognized. However, the purpose of this interaction is not who is to blame for the tension—the boss will win that give-and-take every time, especially a bad boss! Rather, the goal is to determine how can the situation be improved and the relationship bettered. It is a win-win attitude and

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<sup>126</sup> Horn, *Take the Bully by the Horns*, 142-43.

<sup>127</sup> Exodus 7:8-13.

<sup>128</sup> Exodus 7:14-12:51.

approach. The employee may learn why the boss is upset or disappointed. This may or may not match the employee's perceptions or assumptions. Talking about the situation should bring understanding, and, one hopes, improvement in the boss-worker relationship.

Within this dialogue option, an interesting idea exists: managing your boss. This sounds bizarre or even Machiavellian. No employees are boss over their boss. However, the idea of influencing one's boss or at least influencing one's relationship with the boss has great merit and good results. Gabarro and Kotter state, "A compatible relationship with your superior is essential to being effective in your job."<sup>129</sup> The book by Mann quoted above is a concise treasure of tips about this approach.

The title *Managing Your Boss* is sure to raise eyebrows among many workers; after all isn't it supposed to be the boss who manages them, not the other way around? Yet the theme running through this book is that the relationship between boss and employee should be two-way—employees who want to get ahead should "manage" their boss as much as their boss will be managing them. Workers do not need to be passive recipients of their boss' demands or expectations, but rather, partners in the process through which mutually beneficial goals are achieved.<sup>130</sup>

Nickerson talks about the importance of harmony with one's boss and coworkers and use of good *dialogue* and communications when problems exist:

If you notice any toxic behavior pattern forming between you and a boss . . . choose a day when you feel reasonable and rested, and then open it up. In the clearest and warmest manner you can muster, get it across that (1) You feel uncomfortable with the current state of affairs and want to restore harmony; (2) You have some brief, concrete ideas about ways YOU can change, and would welcome the other person's ideas; [and] (3) You want to know what you can both do now to help team harmony, get what you need, and restore your balance. . . .

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<sup>129</sup> John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, "Managing Your Boss," reprinted article from Harvard Business Review, no. 80140 (no date given).

<sup>130</sup> Mann, *How to Manage Your Boss*, iv.



Don't expect miracles; it takes time and persistence to overcome a toxic pattern even if it's fairly fresh. But do begin. Clear the air while irritations and doubts are still minor.

In a toxic situation, you may think, I'm the one who has been offended. Why should I make the first move? If you're wondering who should make the first overture, here's the answer: the one who can.<sup>131</sup>

Moses tried to dialogue with Pharaoh, as God had commanded him, going to the monarch several times and asking, "Let my people go,"<sup>132</sup> but with inconsistent results.

### Departure

A fourth employee response option is departure, which means quitting one's job. This is opposite of defiance on the fight-flight polarity. It requires an employee to consider personal or family income needs, other work possibilities, and job opportunities for that worker's skills and desires. Choosing to leave a job should never be impulsive. Yet the bad boss setting may become so intolerable that staying is impossible.

Related to the decision to depart one's job is how to do so. Professional courtesy and personal reputation as well as future references dictate that one resign professionally. Giving adequate or company policy notification is important. Not blasting the boss or burning company connections are wise aspects of departing one's a workplace employment. But bottom the line is: If the situation is deplorable, departure may be the right decision. Carter gives some "advice from executives given this [abusive] environment," giving tips about dialogue and then mentioning departing:

If a better job comes along take it. In many job environments today, your loyalty and dedication will be unappreciated and may be misperceived as weakness (fear, insecurity, stupidity). Put your family first. Your boss is not going to come visit you in the retirement home. . . . Anticipate your fate before it becomes fateful.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Pat Nickerson, *Managing Multiple Bosses: How to Juggle Priorities, Personalities, and Projects—and Make It Look Easy* (New York: AMACOM, 1999), 144.

<sup>132</sup> Exodus 7:16; 8:1; 9:1; 10:3.

<sup>133</sup> Carter, *Nasty Bosses*, 97.

Moses and the Israelites finally, under the powerful acts of God, departed their bad boss workplace situation. If they had stayed in Egypt as workers, neither change nor relief was going to occur; a “rescue from the hand of the Egyptians . . . into a good and spacious land” was the only solution.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, today this solution of departure might be the best option for employees suffering under a bad boss.

### Successor

Successor is often the last phase of the developmental relationship. It returns to the starting phase, when many employees themselves attain a supervisory position over others. Then the employee is in the boss’s position and the process recycles. To learn followership and leadership from the bottom up under a boss, even under poor leaders, is essential in becoming an effective boss. The Old Testament kings frequently succeeded their fathers as king over God’s people. Maybe an employee will never become a line supervisor, a shift worker captain, or an office assistant manager. Yet, that person will probably have some life role and relationships in which some leadership is used.

The boss over the Israelites in Egypt was Pharaoh and his chain of command. Moses was a Hebrew,<sup>135</sup> so he too, once a fugitive from Pharaoh,<sup>136</sup> was under the Egyptian king. But called by God to become the leader for Israelites before Pharaoh<sup>137</sup> and then both leader and lawgiver for Israelites after Pharaoh,<sup>138</sup> Moses was the *successor* boss, even if reluctantly and meekly.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Exodus 3:7-8.

<sup>135</sup> Exodus 2:1.

<sup>136</sup> Exodus 2:15.

<sup>137</sup> Exodus 3:10.

<sup>138</sup> Exodus 21:1; 35:1; Deuteronomy 31:9-13.

<sup>139</sup> Exodus 3:11-4:17.

### **David and Saul**

David's relationship with Saul progressed through the six developmental phases discussed suggested above: start, success, stress, support, selection, and successor.

#### **Start**

David started on Saul's staff in a low-key yet significant role. He went from sheepherder to harp player—to soothe the king's spirit or depression.<sup>140</sup> Apparently this was a more private role. Though a young man, David's reputation was good: “a brave man and a warrior, speaks well, and is fine-looking” noted Saul's attendant who made this hire recommendation, “the Lord is with him.”<sup>141</sup> David's public start working for Saul was when this young shepherd lad stepped forward from the pasture onto the battlefield against the Philistine giant Goliath.<sup>142</sup>

#### **Success**

The young shepherd started with dramatic success, defending Israel and God's name successfully by defeating the Philistine champion Goliath.<sup>143</sup> Earlier he had success as a gifted musician playing during the king's times of moodiness and depression.<sup>144</sup> David was now a victorious warrior and a gifted palace staff member working for the king as his boss.<sup>145</sup> What a great asset for Saul's team and his organization. Who would not want a skillful, confident, and successful young leader like David?

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<sup>140</sup> 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

<sup>141</sup> 1 Samuel 16:18.

<sup>142</sup> 1 Samuel 17:32, 45-47.

<sup>143</sup> 1 Samuel 17.

<sup>144</sup> 1 Samuel 16:14-23; 18:10-11.

<sup>145</sup> 1 Samuel 18:2, 5.

### Stress

However, strain and stress in the relationship soon developed: David's success and reputation surpassed that of his employer,<sup>146</sup> and King Saul became "angry, galled, and jealous."<sup>147</sup> Then he became murderous toward his young superstar.<sup>148</sup> This growing envy, jealousy, and animosity from Saul toward David produced great stress for both men—certainly for David. The young warrior-leader, under Saul's kingly authority, did not understand why his boss apparently disliked and distrusted him. This definitely was a reversal of how their relationship started, when Saul "liked him very much."<sup>149</sup>

### Support

David needed support in his bad boss situation. He did not know what to do or how to resolve this stress and hostility with his boss. He sought support from Jonathan,<sup>150</sup> his wife Michal,<sup>151</sup> Samuel,<sup>152</sup> and even outsiders when fled Saul's presence.<sup>153</sup> He also sought support from the Lord, as indicated by some prayers he made and wrote during these tense times. Fleeing from Saul and his soldiers, he needed God's strength and salvation: "Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, O God . . . strangers are attacking me; ruthless men seek my life—men without regard for God. Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me."<sup>154</sup> Hiding in a cave, he prays, "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy—for in you my soul takes refuge."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5-7.

<sup>147</sup> 1 Samuel 18:8-9.

<sup>148</sup> 1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-10.

<sup>149</sup> 1 Samuel 16:21.

<sup>150</sup> 1 Samuel 19:1ff.

<sup>151</sup> 1 Samuel 19:11-17.

<sup>152</sup> 1 Samuel 19:18.

<sup>153</sup> 1 Samuel 21:1-15; 22:3-4; 27:2-12; 29:1-11.

<sup>154</sup> Psalm 54:1-4.

<sup>155</sup> Psalm 57:1.

### Selection

Employee David had the four options mentioned above for his selection of a response to his bad relationship with King Saul. He could have reacted vindictively and violently to his employer, including killing him.<sup>156</sup> Selection of response choices out of the four postulated above—defeat, defiance, dialogue, or departure—seemed to narrow down for David to primarily two options.

### Defeat

As a strong, capable, and successful young leader, David was not passive or defeated by the anger or threats of Saul; he was trying to be supportive<sup>157</sup> and soothing to the moody king.<sup>158</sup> He who in the bush defeated the lion and the bear<sup>159</sup> and on the battlefield defeated Goliath, was not going to be easily intimidated by an angry boss. Defeat was not an option to David in the face of adversaries, animal or human.

### Defiance

David was not defiant, confrontational, or rebellious toward his boss, King Saul. He could have been defiant against the one threatening him. David had the backing of the people and even of the officers in Saul's army.<sup>160</sup> Therefore, through defiance, he could have easily led an overthrow of King Saul and installed himself as king, which God and Samuel had already anointed him to be.<sup>161</sup> Later, David twice could have killed Saul, but he did not. Defiance was not David's choice for responding to Saul.

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<sup>156</sup> 1 Samuel 24, 26.

<sup>157</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5.

<sup>158</sup> 1 Samuel 18:10.

<sup>159</sup> 1 Samuel 17:37.

<sup>160</sup> 1 Samuel 18:5.

<sup>161</sup> 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

### Dialogue

David tried dialogue, to discuss Saul's resentment of him and to re-establish rapport and a peaceful relationship. First, he tried this indirectly through his colleague and confidante, Jonathan.<sup>162</sup> But Saul reversed his word to Jonathan, after saying David would not be killed.<sup>163</sup> Twice David directly talked with Saul, trying to resolve the hostility that the king developed for David.<sup>164</sup> Nevertheless, the animosity remained in Saul, and interpersonal resolution between the two men was impossible.

### Departure

So, David decides to depart and separate himself from Saul's presence and power. He quits his job as a key staff member for the king, though David's attitude toward his bad boss was always one of respect and even loyalty, as he understood the person and his position to be "the Lord's anointed."<sup>165</sup> Thus, David chooses departure as the best option to Saul's unpredictable behavior and hostility toward him—putting distance between the two of them, who cannot work or exist together. This was David's response option choice, as he worked under a bad boss. He left his position and job.

### Successor

The David-Saul relationship did develop through phases and stages: start, success, stress, support, and selection. David left Saul's presence and a powerful position as a top leader in the new nation of Israel. Eventually, as God had ordained and arranged, David *succeeds* Saul as Israel's king. The sixth and final phase of this relationship shows the workplace employee becoming the organizational employer successor, the boss. The

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<sup>162</sup> 1 Samuel 19:4-7.

<sup>163</sup> 1 Samuel 19:6-10.

<sup>164</sup> 1 Samuel 24, 26.

<sup>165</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6, 10; 26:8, 11, 16; 2 Samuel 1:14.

follower has become the leader, and now the employee-employer developmental relationship restarts, with David as the boss and others as his workers, assistants, and followers.

#### **(4) Are There Spiritual Principles for Working under a Bad Boss?**

For workers under a bad boss, are there any spiritual principles to help such employees? Recently, expressions of spirituality have entered workplace settings. The question is: how do these concepts relate to the Christian faith and biblical teachings?

##### ***Spirituality in the Workplace***

How can people find fulfillment or stressed-out employees survive laboring under a bad boss? One approach is spiritual. Recently spirituality has emerged as both an organizational program focus and an internal philosophy for workers in their external grind of work. Books and business leaders talk about value of employees as persons as well as their employment for profits. Peppers and Briskin observe,

Are we to be cogs in the machinery, subject to moronic bosses and technique of manipulation? Or are we perched at the precipice of a new awareness, where caring, meaning, and stewardship actually matter? How does one dare yearn for something more, when so many workplaces seem aligned solely with financial survival and profit making? Why is it that the soul now matters?<sup>166</sup>

Then they suggest new approaches to life and living and the workplace:

First is about the nature of being: Be still. Cultivate inner peace. Be present. Be happy in whatever circumstance you're in. The second is about the nature of becoming: Be all you can be. Go for it! Do whatever it takes. Blaze a new trail!<sup>167</sup>

That is positive thinking with New Age adages. However, that is more a self-generated, internal reflection about one's workplace and work. It is the world's point of

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<sup>166</sup> Cheryl Peppers and Alan Briskin, *Bringing Your Soul to Work: An Everyday Practice* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2000), 2-3.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 119.

view, not God's. It is not the same as the Word's perspective: that the revelatory, redemptive, and reconciliatory good news in Jesus Christ and by the Spirit can change people's lives—which includes workplaces, workers, bosses, and work relationships.<sup>168</sup>

### **Christianity in the Workplace**

As mentioned earlier, much of our lifetime centers on and at work. Nolan summarizes well the workplace setting for this thesis and a Christian perspective on it:

Most of us will spend the majority of our waking hours as adults at work. Add to that the time spent preparing for our career in school and in training. Then, there is the time preparing for, traveling and worrying about work. We must also recognize the work we do for which we do not get paid . . . well over half our lives, we are working. At work, more than anywhere else, our lives play out. This is where we pour out our proverbial blood, sweat and tears. If we are to integrate our lives, if we are to realize our aspiration to move closer to God, it will have to be where we spend our days, and sometimes our nights and weekends as well. It is in our everyday lives, in our day-to-day experiences that God is drawing us to God's own self. The circumstances, events, problems and opportunities that we meet each day, the lives we live each day are where we encounter God. A spirituality of work begins with the recognition of this and that those we encounter are important agents on our path to self-transcendence toward a loving, inviting, empowering God.<sup>169</sup>

The Christian faith offers a different from New Age spirituality, as Nolan notes in Jesus' summary of God's law in the Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor:

Meditation on the Great Commandment and reflections on personal experience form the heart of the quest for a Christian spirituality of work: We seek the integration of the whole of our lives. This quest toward the ultimate is rooted in God disclosed in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, active and present in our hearts and the community of discipleship called the church, powers it.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Romans 8:16-22.

<sup>169</sup> James. L. Nolan, *Doing the Right Thing at Work: A Catholic Guide to Faith, Business, and Ethics* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006), 30.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



Jesus Christ offers good news for women and men and for them in their workplaces—that he makes all things new, even their work relationships.<sup>171</sup> Such spiritual principles of the Bible counter the physical and spiritual pathos that Terkel observed.

Such internal thoughtful reflections about external realities and relationships can improve a worker's attitude about work, coworkers, customers, and supervisors. A spiritual perspective on this area of life, as well as all areas of our lives, is not only useful, it is vital. Spirituality is becoming a topic in today's workplaces. However, is its focus and emphasis on internal self-reflection and self-rejuvenation? Or, is this spirituality on the transcendent God who created us and who, from outside us, reveals himself in Word and Spirit to give us—inside ourselves—meaning, value, purpose, and abundant life? This latter spirituality is that of the Bible and Jesus Christ.<sup>172</sup>

David had problems with Saul under whom he worked, but his perspective on his employer, in attitude and actions, continuously was that his boss was “the anointed of the Lord.”<sup>173</sup> Our attitude about our work and working for our boss are the two foundation issues for us as Christians in the workplace.

### **Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss**

In the New Testament epistles, Paul and other writers speak to key relationships in our lives: wife-husband, children-fathers (i.e., parents), and slaves-masters. God's Word does give principles about the slave-master interaction of the first century. Scriptural passages about leadership are abundant, including admonitions to those who supervise others in the role of masters. However, leadership and leaders are not the theme of this thesis-project. Rather, this study centers on workers laboring under a bad boss.

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<sup>171</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.

<sup>172</sup> John 14:6; 17:3.

<sup>173</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6, 10; 26:8, 11, 16; 2 Samuel 1:14.

The master-slave relationship may offer suggestions about behavior in the employee-employer workplace relationship. As Jordan expressed in his Southern culture paraphrase of Ephesians 6:5,<sup>174</sup> some of the admonitions for “slaves” may apply to workers and employees in today’s world.

Thus, some Bible exhortations and encouragements to slaves, though in a different context, may be suggestive and useful for us in our modern world. This study offers six principles of how Christian employees might perceive their workplace and perform their work under their supervisor or boss, even if that person is a bad leader. We will see from some biblical passages that these principles emerge: (1) seek God’s mercy for your workplace situation, (2) submit with respect to your boss, (3) have a sincere heart obeying your boss as you would Christ, (4) seen or unseen, obey and work for your boss, (5) serve wholeheartedly your boss as if you are serving the Lord, and (6) serve your masters, earthly and heavenly.

#### Seek God’s Mercy

As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master [and] as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy.

—Psalm 123:2

Believers should always seek the Lord and God’s mercy. However, this is definitely necessary when there are difficulties, distress, discouragement, and/or depression in life. The realism and vulnerability of the Psalms frequently reveal the hurts of David, and they reveal the gracious mercy and faithful help from the Lord.

Jeremiah shared God’s words to the Israelites captured by the Babylonians and then forced to live and labor in foreign workplaces:

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<sup>174</sup> Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version of Paul’s Epistles* (New York: A Koinonia Publication, Association Press, 1968), 113.

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper. . . . “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”<sup>175</sup>

Ezra expressed this same faith and confidence as the people were returning from Babylon to Jerusalem some seventy year later: “Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness.”<sup>176</sup>

The Lord is with us, and he calls us to settle down wherever he had placed us. Sometimes we get so worked up, even working for the Lord, that we forget he is with us and wants us to find peace in his presence. Martha, “distracted by her many tasks” (i.e., to be hospitable and serve food) for Jesus, had to be instructed about this.<sup>177</sup>

### Submit with Respect

Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering, because he is conscious of God. How is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

—1 Peter 2:18-21

As workers and employees, we are not just encouraged but instructed to be submissive to our employers and bosses, according to Peter, whether we are working

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<sup>175</sup> Jeremiah 29:4-7, 11-12.

<sup>176</sup> Ezra 9:9.

<sup>177</sup> Luke 10:38-42.

under happy or harsh bosses, under benevolent or bad bosses. If we respect our boss's position of leadership, we will probably respond respectfully and perform well. If we respect our boss as a person, a human being even if difficult or bad, we will be respectful and will do good work. Finally, if we respect God and his Word, we will respond to our boss respectfully in attitude and actions, even if there is stress with our boss. As Peter states above, God commends this—and Christ, though not in a workplace setting, suffered unjustly in his work of redemption and crucifixion.

With a bad boss, Christians should be neither defeated nor defiant. Rather they should pray for God's mercy, wisdom, and help. They should also work for better understanding with that supervisor and relationship improvement by dialogue, with departure as a last choice response.

### Sincere Heart

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it . . . with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

—Colossians 3:22

Paul admonishes slaves, and us as employees, to serve our earthly employers and bosses with a sincerity of heart. We are not to be deceitful or devious, but workers of honesty and integrity. We are to be sincere and genuine, not false or cunning in our work and in our relationship to our boss. Why? Out of reverence for our Lord. That is, as Christ's followers, in our lives we want to honor him. Therefore, in our work, we are serving him as well as our boss. Would we serve and relate to Jesus openly, honestly, and respectfully? If so, that is the same manner in which we are to relate to our difficult supervisor—with sincerity.

### Seen or Unseen

Slaves, obey your earthly masters . . . not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

—Ephesians 6:6

We like to look good when someone is watching what we are doing. We perform well when others observe us, at play or at work. The phrase “look busy” cynically expresses that thought in the context of the workplace. Sometimes when a supervisor is not present or not observing us, employees might slack off in their work efforts. Some workers even steal materials or items, more than a pencil or a pen, from their company when no one is looking.

The quality of a workout practice by an athlete or a musician and the quality of work performance by an employee is best be evaluated when no one’s eyes are on this. Paul writes to Christian slaves and workers, instructing them to work hard and win approval of their bosses when the latter eyes observe the employee and when that master or boss is not watching.

### Serve Wholeheartedly

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.

—Ephesians 6:7

How do we perceive the world around us, with its challenges and conflicts? How do we understand our workplace, with its problems and people, especially if we have a very difficult supervisor?

Moses sent out a twelve-man reconnaissance team to spy out the land into which the Lord was leading Israel. Then the people discussed and debated the spies’ report.

There were two views of the situation. The majority report by ten said the environment was too threatening and the inhabitants were too strong, that “we will be defeated,” yet the minority report led by Caleb and Joshua said because “the Lord is with us,” we will be successful.<sup>178</sup> The people questioned, complained, and rebelled about going forward into the new land. The Lord had had it with the people:

Not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me whole-heartedly, I will bring him into the land he went and his descendents will inherit it.<sup>179</sup>

Wholehearted following and serving does not mean we do not recognize there are obstacles, problems, difficulties, or challenges. Caleb and Joshua did not dispute the facts about the land, the fortified cities, and the big inhabitants. Nevertheless, they did see the situation with faith in the Lord and wanted to move forward. They were not going to go ahead half-heartedly or with no real heart for doing it. No, they were fully committed and wholeheartedly ready.

We, too, in working for and serving our organization and our boss, should work whole-heartedly. As Christians, anything less than whole-hearted work is dishonoring and disobeying the Lord, whom we are to serve even as we are serving our supervisor.

#### Serve Your Masters, Earthly and Heavenly

. . . since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven.

—Ephesians 6:9

Though this verse directs masters how to treat their slaves or workers, it points out a theological truth. Everyone—master and slaves, bosses and workers—has the

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<sup>178</sup> Numbers 13:17-14:9.

<sup>179</sup> Numbers 14:23-24.

Master who is over them in heaven. The manner in which we seek to serve Jesus Christ will be seen in how we serve our boss, even a difficult one.

If the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, and the imprisoned are Jesus' brothers,<sup>180</sup> then are not the bad bosses too? For they can be described managerially, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually in Jesus' descriptors. So, paraphrasing our Lord's exhortation about ministering to the needy:

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least [or the worst]—of these my brothers, you have done it unto me. . . . [We] will ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least [or the worst] of these, you did not do for me."<sup>181</sup>

### **David and Saul**

David followed these six principles in working for his employer, King Saul.

First, he sought God's mercy during turbulent time with his boss. He consulted the Lord for guidance and safety "when David learned that Saul was plotting against him."<sup>182</sup> When his men talked about stoning him after their wives and children had been captured, David "found strength in the Lord his God."<sup>183</sup> While he was fleeing and hiding from Saul and his men, David sought God's mercy, presence, peace, and protection.<sup>184</sup>

Second, he submitted with respect to his boss. From the start of his service for Saul, David was always respectful of his employer the king. He spoke of himself to Saul as "your servant" several times when offering to fight Goliath.<sup>185</sup> David seemed to be

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<sup>180</sup> Matthew 25:31-46.

<sup>181</sup> Matthew 25:40, 44-45.

<sup>182</sup> 1 Samuel 23:9-12.

<sup>183</sup> 1 Samuel 30:6.

<sup>184</sup> Psalms 18, 34, 52, 54, and 56-59 have title ascriptions linking those psalms to David's fleeing. David wrote other psalms that also demonstrated he sought God, probably as avoided Saul.

<sup>185</sup> 1 Samuel 17:32, 34, 36.

humble before Saul when the king offered not one but two daughters for David to marry.<sup>186</sup> Even after Saul first threw spears at David, his harp player and young warrior,<sup>187</sup> David returned to play again.<sup>188</sup> When he could have killed the one hunting him, David spared Saul's life twice,<sup>189</sup> respecting him as "the Lord's Anointed."<sup>190</sup>

Third, he had a sincere heart in relating to his boss. David went to meet and talk with Saul after the time in the cave when he could have killed the king. To show his honesty about not wanting to hurt Saul, David met him and then "bowed down and prostrated him with his face to the ground" before Saul.<sup>191</sup> He asked the king after the second time he spared Saul, "Why is my lord pursuing his servant? What have I done, and what wrong am I guilty of?"<sup>192</sup> During their growing tensions, David continued trying to work for and relate to Saul, and he did so in an open, non-deceitful manner.

Fourth, whether seen or unseen, David worked for and interacted with his boss the same way. When he was given a task, he went out and accomplished it. "Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully."<sup>193</sup> In his conversations with Jonathan, David honored the king,<sup>194</sup> but he wanted the hostility to end. Unseen to Saul, David tells his companion, as they sneak up on a sleeping Saul, that he cannot kill the anointed one of the Lord.<sup>195</sup> This is just he said when he is seen and heard by King Saul shortly thereafter. Around him or away from him, David was consistent in his faithfulness to his boss.

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<sup>186</sup> 1 Samuel 18:17-30.

<sup>187</sup> 1 Samuel 18:10-11.

<sup>188</sup> 1 Samuel 19:9-10.

<sup>189</sup> 1 Samuel 24, 26.

<sup>190</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6; 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Samuel 1:14.

<sup>191</sup> 1 Samuel 24:8.

<sup>192</sup> 1 Samuel 26:18.

<sup>193</sup> 1 Samuel 5:8.

<sup>194</sup> 1 Samuel 20:1-23.

<sup>195</sup> 1 Samuel 26:8-11.



Fifth, he served wholeheartedly under his boss. David performed faithfully for Saul, whether playing his harp or fighting the enemies of Israel. His confrontation and conquest of Goliath required a wholehearted commitment. He did things enthusiastically, and not halfway. His consistent benevolence toward Saul earned this comment by the king to David, “You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.”<sup>196</sup> In his lament following the death of Saul and Jonathan, the wholehearted nature of David’s feeling, thoughts, and actions toward his former boss are expressed. He shows full involvement and total commitment to things he is doing.

Sixth, David served his masters, earthly and heavenly. David served Saul well, at least as long as he could, though he finally did select departure in response to the stressful situation with his boss. He regularly sought the Lord for support and guidance, and he sought to serve God well. David indicates that he was serving before both the Lord God and Saul the king when he spared the sleeping monarch.<sup>197</sup> Underpinning David’s employment, relationship, and interaction with Saul was his foundational belief that the Lord had appointed and anointed Saul as the king of Israel and the leader of God’s people. Therefore, to honor and to serve the Lord meant honoring and serving his leader.

### **Conclusion**

Four core concepts and questions provide a biblical and theological framework for this thesis: (1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer? (2) Who is a bad boss? (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss? and (4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss? With these constructs, some pertinent literature is examined and analyzed in chapter 3.

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<sup>196</sup> 1 Samuel 24:17.

<sup>197</sup> 1 Samuel 26:11.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 1 stated the problem and setting for this thesis: working under a bad boss in a workplace. Accompanying this thesis is a case study focusing on the employee-employer relationship of David and King Saul in the Bible and a project developing this case study into a small-group Bible study curriculum. Chapter 2 discussed four core concepts with their various subpoints for the theological and biblical study of this topic. In chapter 3, these core concepts guide a literature review. Out of these core concepts and this literature review will develop a small-group Bible study curriculum of the unique workplace David-Saul interaction. Explained in chapter 4, this curriculum will explore biblical principles and applications for today's workers and employees under a bad supervisor.

Constructing a theological and biblical framework for thesis inquiry relates closely to a compilation of literature and materials identified, reviewed, and used for the thesis. The four core concepts and questions developed for this thesis-project topic are:

- (1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?
- (2) Who is a bad boss?
- (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?
- (4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

### **Best Books and Materials**

These above constructs are lenses through which to look at the literature for this thesis-project. Sometimes information on questions one and four intersect or overlap; the same is true for questions two and three. But the main thoughts and theories of the authors as they related to the four core concepts is the objective of this chapter.

The literature review provided much information, but two shortcomings became apparent. First, no one book discusses all four core concepts. Some focus on bad bosses and their employees; others, on spirituality and the workplace. Second, various books discuss spirituality and even Christianity in work settings, but none addressed the question about working for a bad boss. The works listed start with the most useful, even though comparison is hard since they do not all cover the same topics and core concepts.

#### **Nash and McLennan**

One of the best analyses published about faith and Christianity in the workplace is Nash and McLennan's *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*.<sup>1</sup>

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Nash and McLennan answer this first core question well, although their answer is not a good one. Their first chapter is entitled "Spirituality Goes to Work, the Church Stays Away: Religious Disconnects in American Business Lives."<sup>2</sup> The authors' theme is the church and clergy have become isolated, ignorant, and ineffective about integrating faith and work with the business world and that they are "failing to engage" on this issue.

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001). This book also has a companion study guide under the same title with this subtitle, "A Guide to Reflection," to help businesspeople discuss the book plus the relationship between work and faith.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

They cite six major “social and economic realities that underlie the current obsession with workplace spirituality . . . and how the new spirituality answers these needs in a way that mainstream Christianity currently does not.”<sup>3</sup> Nash and McLennan refer to this new faith focus as “secular spirituality,” taking that term from the Dalai Lama.<sup>4</sup> His, or their, description of this concept helps us to understand the non-Christian, non-traditional spirituality spreading in today’s workplaces:

Buddhist practices and generalized beliefs . . . are accessible to all people, without the strict religious order of Tibetan Buddhism in its institutional form. In fact, today’s spirituality is to be found equally in the mystical and the mundane, the scientific and the irrational, the therapeutic and the pedagogical, the personal and the universal.<sup>5</sup>

Nash and McLennan continue to argue that this spirituality movement is saturating business philosophies, seminars, leaders, and employees:

Many spirituality programs explicitly advocate the importance of having a developed personal religion but refrain from endorsing a particular dogma or theistic stance. Few of the popular programs are allied with any ecclesiastical institution.

Essentially, the new secular programs are presenting spiritual alternatives to the church, but not necessarily to people’s faith. Participation by nonconservative Christians is significant. Many report that these new books and seminars help them make connections between their belief system and what they do at work.

The secular spirituality programs do not explicitly exclude Christians or atheists, as long as they support humanistic values. Indeed, they target everyone, and in many cases everything. Says one new spirituality devotee in real estate: “Businesspeople have got to realize this spiritual thing is key. I mean, they have to know how to bring their whole selves to the marketplace. It’s going to transform business.”<sup>6</sup>

As Nash and McLennan note, different concepts about faith and its entry and application have entered today’s workplaces. Because of rising numbers of books,

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<sup>3</sup> Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

articles, and seminars on this subject, they note, “Spirituality, it seems, is the new resource for business creativity, personal leadership, and social harmony.”<sup>7</sup> Yet whereas other spiritual approaches have entered the marketplace to bring understanding to it, Christian leaders and thinkers have not done so. Nash and McLennan argue there is an indifference between the church/clergy and the business world,<sup>8</sup> and a “strong disconnect” even by faithful Christians “between their experience of the church or private faith and the spirit-challenging conditions of the workplace.”<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, as Christians, we must become aware of these gaps. We must learn about these new spiritual ideas, concepts, and practices of coworkers, or we will be like lights for Christ isolated and insulated under bowls!<sup>10</sup>

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Neither one of these questions is addressed by Nash and McLennan. Their book is more a general, theoretical overview about faith and work, beliefs in businesspeople, and spirituality in today’s workplaces. This work does not, nor did it intend to, analyze bosses and working under bosses. So on these core concepts, it was of little help.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

The answer to this core question is a bifurcated yes and no.

First, the “yes” part of the answer. Nash and McLennan analyze some spiritual principles and ideologies in the workplace as they discuss ideologies now in the business world. They record much about the new spirituality practiced by businesspeople today.

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<sup>7</sup> Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday*, xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 5:15.

One of this book's assets is that discriminates between secular spirituality and biblical Christianity. The former in some ways, in books (as we will see) and in seminars, is speaking to the concerns of those who are not in churches but in today's workplace. This new spirituality does discuss principles such as searching for meaning in life, empowerment, basic humanistic principles, respect of others, linkage with the environment and even universe, and simplicity and tranquility. It offers to fulfill for people what Nash and McLennan call "felt needs: emergent awareness of the sacred self (soul), harmony with an ultimate order (balance), connectedness with community (sacred community), and religiously consistent morality (faith-based business ethics)."<sup>11</sup>

These authors note we can respond to the new spiritual movement in one of two ways. We can view it as a moral nightmare, naïve, and unprepared for hard times, or as positive responses to longings to recover the sacred in life and relationships.<sup>12</sup> The reality: it is a phenomenon of our world into which Jesus said, "Go." Nash and McLennan see that many concepts and values of the business world contrast with those of Christianity, thus contributing to some divergent views between this new spirituality and biblical spirituality. The authors identify these differences: the cross versus competition, humility versus profit, self-sacrificing versus success, and a narrow and exclusive way versus a broad and inclusive way. As they observe,

The fundamental polarization between God and humans expressed in the Old and New Testaments is difficult to reconcile with the holism of the secular spirituality movement. . . . Christian social ethics . . . emphasize the cross, not dharma. There is an enormous difference between finding oneself through suffering and self-denial and "letting go" and "going with the flow."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

Another strength of this work is the authors' schema to understand and to join faith and business, their "Integration Model for Faith and Business: Seven Christian Coping Strategies."<sup>14</sup> This idea is presented in an excellent graphic presentation<sup>15</sup> and in textual elaboration.<sup>16</sup> Their analysis of both businesspeople and church professionals has two polarities about faith and the business world. On one end is no possible integration or connections between faith and work; at the other end, total integration and no distinction. They postulate seven different ways, along their faith-business spectrum, how businesspeople and church professionals cope strategically with these two concepts.

Nash and McLennan do give some spiritual principles or suggestions "to encourage the religious quest of businesspeople."<sup>17</sup> They offer reflection questions and action ideas to stimulate one's spirituality in the workplace.<sup>18</sup> They also provide some "recommendations for moving forward to create a better business-church dialogue . . . guidelines for both business and church professionals."<sup>19</sup>

This is the "no" part of the answer to the question whether or not Nash and McLennan give any spiritual principles or patterns for working under a bad boss. As first-rate as this book is, it was not much help for this thesis-project focus. It gives great insights about secular spirituality in the business world and how the church has abdicated or ignored engagement with working men and women about faith in their real-world situations. However, it did not discuss any specific employee-employer issue such as a

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<sup>14</sup> Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday*, 42-43.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 42-65.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 252-54.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 263-68.

bad boss, which is the focus of this research and project. Nevertheless, this book by Nash and McLennan is still highly recommended reading for all Christians.<sup>20</sup>

### **Mitroff and Denton**

Another top-notch book in the field of spirituality and the workplace is Mitroff and Denton's systematic study, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*.<sup>21</sup> Mitroff and Denton's book and the one by Nash and McLennan should both be required reading for seminarians and pastors, as well as for Christians in secular jobs. Both books known provide a thorough understanding of spirituality and Christianity in today's workplace. Similar to Nash and McLennan, Mitroff and Denton analyze theoretical concepts about faith at work and provide statistical data about spiritual behavior practices of working people.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

In the foreword to this book, management consultant Warren Bennis commends the research-based effort by Mitroff and Denton:

I have to state up front that this is not one of those preachy, up-lifting books on taking the soul out of the closet and making it OK for workers to pray on the job. The authors don't for a minute confuse spirituality with varieties of religious experience, though they do take religion very seriously. No, what makes this book unique, powerful, and something of a landmark contribution is that they base their finding—the first book to my knowledge that does this, thankfully—on an empirical and conceptual integration of spirituality in the workplace.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Nash and McLennan give a good explanation of their research methodology (275-83). Especially useful is their "Notes" section, where they list their "top 25" books on the new spirituality (289-90) and their four-page "Suggested Reading" list (303-7) after they reviewed more than 125 books in the areas of new spirituality, science, and religion, or management and religion" (289 n. 5).

<sup>21</sup> Ian I. Mitroff and Elizabeth A. Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xii.



These authors note that in bookstores one can be “overwhelmed by the number of books with *spirit* or *soul* in their title [and] a growing number . . . pertain to business . . . [so] it isn’t clear how applicable they are to a board range of executives and organizations.”<sup>23</sup>

Though not written for Christians, this groundbreaking 1999 work about spirituality in the workplace and in academia can help Christians better understand the environment in which they work and the spiritual conditions there:

We believe today’s organizations are impoverished spiritually and that many of their most important problems are due to this impoverishment. In other words . . . [they] are suffering from a deep, spiritual emptiness. The fact that spirituality has been avoided for so long by the field of organizational science as a serious topic for empirical and systematic study is damning evidence of the spiritual impoverishment of academia.<sup>24</sup>

This book even more so than the one by Nash and McLennan—which slightly implied a Christian view on the issue—indicates no Christian perspective about work or the workplace. Yet its authors, like Nash and McLennan, provide a wealth of information and insights that should help Christian understand their workplace better.

First, their study offers five models for “fostering spirituality in workplace,”<sup>25</sup> a fascinating examination of how spirituality can influence organizations. Their five “Models for Spiritual Development in the Workplace” are Religion-Based Organization (Taking Over Your Company for Christ), Evolutionary Organization (Called to Spirituality), Recovering Organization (Shaking Off Addiction), Socially Responsible Organization (For the Betterment of Society), and Values-Based Organization (We Are

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<sup>23</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, 16. Their footnote 2 here leads to their Notes reference (239-40), which cites several business books on this subject. One they list is J. K. Salkin, *Being God’s Partner: How to Find the Hidden Link Between Spirituality and Your Work* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1994). This author did not gain access to this book, but it would be interesting to read a Jewish view about spirituality on the workplace.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

Family!).<sup>26</sup> They argue effectively that various spiritual values generate and guide different types of organizations and businesses and their employees.

The authors introduce “underlying dimensions” common for all five models to analyze the models.<sup>27</sup> They explain in detail ten of the thirty dimensions to show how these parameters guide the five-model comparison. These include precipitating event(s), guiding text(s), hierarchy, competition and enemies, principle of hope, and management style.<sup>28</sup> Other characteristics include such elements as values alignment, prime virtues, language and concept words, definition of spirituality, religious advisors or guides, and primary governing metaphor. In an effective schematic matrix, “Detailed Dimensions of the Five Models,”<sup>29</sup> all thirty dimensions guide the comparison and contrast for the five models via parallel columns. A great value of this book is that it broadens understanding of how different spiritual concepts are effective in different workplace organizations.

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Mitroff and Denton do not address these questions or topics. Their excellent analysis, like that of Nash and McLennan, is more a 30,000-feet altitude strategic view than a ground tactical perspective. Their interest is more in the theoretical than in the topical, more in the conceptual than in specific.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Again, as the first book cited above, this work does not speak to any principles for working under a bad boss. However, it does explain some of the spiritual principles and

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<sup>26</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, 55-163.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 169-77.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Appendix C, 229-38.

ideas in today's workplaces. Thus, it expands one's scope of understanding the many ways spirituality can and does affect workers through organizational ethos. Mitroff and Denton point out that they do not concur with all spirituality concepts, though they give no indication of a Christian faith. They quote from a New Age author on the spiritual question of reincarnation and past-life therapy:

No one can prove it, but I strongly suspect that the answer [to the question, Is reincarnation literally true?] is yes, no, and maybe. While the evidence both for and against reincarnation is inconclusive, the idea certainly appeals to me. And no matter what other explanations can be offered for what seem to be past lives, there is no way to diminish the therapeutic benefit that many people have had from undergoing what seem to be regressions into past lives. . . .

If you find a therapist who does past-life regressions, put them to the same test you would any other potential health care provider. Ask about their training, request references, interview them, and then add your intuition to what your research provides.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, they note as researchers and observers of modern culture and its business workplaces:

Although we ourselves may not endorse the existence of reincarnation or although we may give limited credence to past-life experiences, as students of spirituality we must acknowledge that such feelings are one of the major forms that spirituality takes. In short, we have to explore the many forms of spiritual beliefs, as well as the functions that such beliefs serve, without necessarily condoning them. . . .

Belief in something does not guarantee its existence. . . . We are not interested in proving spirituality any more than we are interested in proving the existence of a god or higher power. Instead, we are interested in understanding what a belief in spirituality confers in people's lives.<sup>31</sup>

Spirituality and spiritual concepts, in various forms and expressions, can have some positive affects on individuals and within organizations. Mitroff and Denton report their data showed:

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<sup>30</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, 18. They reference this quote from J. Borysenko, *Fire in the Soul: A New Psychology of Spiritual Optimism* (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 111, 116.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv, 25-26.

those organizations that identify more strongly with spirituality or that have a greater sense of spirituality have employees who (1) are less fearful of their organizations, (2) are far less likely to compromise their basic beliefs and values in the workplace, (3) perceive their organizations as more profitable, and (4) report that they can bring significantly more of their complete selves to work, specifically their creativity and intelligence.<sup>32</sup>

So, this book was valuable for this thesis-project by its discussion about the concept of spirituality. “Soul” and “spirituality” are not easy to define. Yet that does not mean we should not try to do so. Respondents to this study by Mitroff and Denton gave good descriptions, rather than precise definitions. Yet those expressed meanings and implications for workplace people help to define this concept. These are some of the descriptors of spirituality:

It is not formal, structured, or organized nor is it denominational [which is how respondents perceived “religion”]. . . . Spirituality is broadly inclusive . . . the ultimate source and provider of meaning and purpose in our lives . . . expression of the awe we feel in the presence of the transcendent . . . the sacredness of everything, including the ordinariness of everyday life . . . the deep feeling of the interconnectedness of everything, an inexhaustible source of faith and willpower . . . [and] finally, spirituality and faith are inseparable.<sup>33</sup>

But this book by Mitroff and Denton was not helpful on the specific topic of an employee-employer bad boss relationship. The authors focused on leaders, not on workers. Their data came from high-level managers and executives. The authors state that their work is “one of the first systematic studies of the beliefs and practices with high-level managers and executives with regard to spirituality in the workplace.”<sup>34</sup> They do recognize they have “limited samples”: 90 in-depth interviews and only 131 returned

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<sup>32</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, xiv.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., xiv-xv.

mail surveys (out of some 2,000 mailed out). These are research weaknesses. They limited their sample population.

However, what about the majority of company employees, such as assembly-line teams and shift workers? What do they think, believe, and live concerning spiritually in their workplace? Are not their views equally as important as what bosses think? In fact, will not their beliefs and behaviors also influence an organization's corpus from the bottom upward or the middle outward? Similarly, there is no section on supervisor-subordinate relationships or the bad boss syndrome. However, these were not their intended research topics.

This book was not examining practical principles for individuals of faith, so there were no implications or extrapolations from their work about practical spiritual principles in the workplace or working under a bad boss. In fact, a shortcoming in this book and for the core concept of spiritual principles is one that Mitroff and Denton acknowledge. Their "Religion-Based Organization" information and concepts come out of a very conservative, even fundamentalist perspective. Their portrait of this model comes "as close as possible to the picture of a complete takeover of a business organization of Christ (or any other particular god or deity)."<sup>35</sup> They used as their primary source and quote often from William H. Nix's *Transforming Your Workplace for Christ* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997).<sup>36</sup> It is also interesting to note that they use social critic Bruce Bawer's book, *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (New York: Crown, 1997). Those two sources, especially the perspective of the latter one, present an extreme expression of Christianity.

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<sup>35</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, 8.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 61. Mitroff and Denton have good references in their "Notes" section, but they do not have a bibliography in their book.

Mitroff and Denton do confess this, but only at the end of their chapter “Taking Over Your Company for Christ: The Religion-Based Organization,” as a final note:

It is important to stress that not all Religion-Based Organizations are as extreme as the portrait drawn. . . . Not all Religion-Based Organizations believe the myth that their religion and theirs alone is the only true path to God. . . .

Many Religion-Based Organizations are much more ecumenical than the one described here. For this reason, the model in this chapter is probably better described as a Fundamentalist Religion-Based Organizations.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, their model is just one type of Christian faith applied in the workplace, rather than concepts and approaches from the great diversity of Christians, the variety of Christian expressions and engagement in the workplace, or the multitude of Christian denominations or even other religious faiths.

This is an unfair, imbalanced view of Christianity in the workplace. Not all Christians understand their mission to be that of converting their company to Christ. Thus, the presentation by Mitroff and Denton skews the picture of religious-based organizations, though it does produce an interesting model to contrast with their other four models. Why pick a fundamentalist perspective? Why not use a moderate or even liberal Christian view? What about a Jewish, a Muslim, or a Confucian view of business and spirituality? Maybe the Christian fundamentalist view is easier to criticize, more black and white, and draws readers better.

But even though Mitroff and Denton did not address the employee-employer relationship of this thesis-project topic, overall their book was instructive for a broader understanding of workplace spirituality. It gave an excellent conceptual framework about how spirituality molded types of organizations in the workplace. Their discussion of

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<sup>37</sup> Mitroff and Denton, *Spiritual Audit*, 74-75.

these organizations demonstrated well how spiritual beliefs and values work in the marketplace. This work is a key resource on this topic.

### **Mann**

The best book about working under a bad boss, or any boss, is Sandi Mann's *Managing Your Boss*. Her succinct analysis makes this book an excellent approach on this topic to anyone, whether in academic circles or on assembly lines.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Like most of the literature reviewed, this book is not a Christian approach to the problem of working under a bad boss, so it provides no help on this D.Min. core concept.

(2) Who is a bad boss?

However, on the topic of bad bosses and how they behave, Mann is superb. She gives two short quizzes for employees to analyze bosses' leadership and thinking styles.<sup>38</sup> In "Dealing with the Boss from Hell," she discusses "the three worst types of bosses—bullying boss, sexually harassing boss, and glory-seeking boss."<sup>39</sup>

Just listing three bad bosses shows the utility of Mann's book. Other writers list six, eight, ten, and even thirty-three boss types.<sup>40</sup> This may only confuse how an employee might understand bad managers and their behavior: "Just how many types and behaviors are there, and which one is my boss?" Business leader and author Stanley Bing, after introducing five attitudes or behaviors of bosses, suggests a multiple-personality bad boss model:

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<sup>38</sup> Sandi Mann, *Managing Your Boss*, Barron's Education Series, A Business Success Guide (Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, 2001), 15-26.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>40</sup> Gini Graham Scott, *A Survival Guide for Working with Bad Bosses: Dealing with Bullies, Idiots, Back-Stabbers, and Other Managers from Hell* (New York: AMACOM, 2006). Scott has thirty-three chapters on bad superior-subordinate workplace situations. Some bosses are named; others are described.

So these are five “types” of bosses, right? Wrong. There is no such thing, in my opinion, as a “type” of boss. There is only the crazy boss himself, with plumes of behaviors rocketing into the environment, all of it fueled by the same illness, the same etiology. It is my conviction that American Management Disease is suffered by a majority of all bosses in the United States between the ages of twenty-six and eighty-two, and by 98 percent of those who make more than \$134,000 per year. I could be off by a couple of dollars, but I don’t think so.<sup>41</sup>

### (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Mann talks about a worker’s interaction with a supervisor not in terms of developmental chronology but as a connectional dynamic. Her book title, though it may be startling, is the crux of her employee-employer relationship:

The title *Managing Your Boss* is sure to raise eyebrows among many workers, after all, isn’t it supposed to be the boss who manages them, not the other way around? Yet the theme running through this book is that the relationship between boss and employee should be two-way. . . . Workers do not need to be passive recipients of their boss’s demands or expectation, but rather partners in the process through which mutually beneficial goals are achieved.<sup>42</sup>

Mann’s book covers two primary themes about working successfully with a boss.

The first theme is to understand your boss: “Research suggests that managers generally have a particular psychological makeup, and appreciating this will help you understand what drives and motivates them and what makes them tick”<sup>43</sup>—or what makes bad ones sick.

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<sup>41</sup> Stanley Bing, *Crazy Bosses: Spotting Them, Serving Them, Surviving Them* (New York: William Morrow, 1992), 92.

<sup>42</sup> Mann, *Managing Your Boss*, iv.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. Mann offers two superb quizzes enabling workers to discern their boss’s styles of leadership and thinking and to respond appropriately (11-26).



Many writings use this title idea.<sup>44</sup> For example, John Gabarro and John Kotter confirm Mann's concept in their *Harvard Business Review* article reprint, "Managing Your Boss," with its subtitle descriptor: "A compatible relationship with your superior is essential to being effective in your job." They point out workers should not underestimate the importance of the boss-subordinate relationship. Confirming Mann and her title, they say that the keys are knowing your boss, your organizational workplace, and yourself: "Managing your boss requires that you gain an understanding of both the boss and his context as well as your own situation and needs."<sup>45</sup>

Mann's second theme for a successful relationship with one's boss, by managing one's boss,

involves the establishment of a "psychological contract" that is made up of those normally unspoken agreements that govern expectations between boss and employee . . . a natural progression of the psychological contact is the art . . . a skill that, when developed, will help ensure that you are—or at least appear to be—everything your boss wants you to be.<sup>46</sup>

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Giving neither a spiritual approach nor spiritual principles, Mann does provide some excellent, practical suggestions on how to work for a bad boss.

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<sup>44</sup> There are many excellent expressions of this insight. *The Harvard Business Review* (HBR) video series has a "Managing Your Boss" thirty-two-minute tape (Northbrook, IL: MTI/Film and Video, 1986). This presentation is based upon a case study by John G. Gabarro and John P. Kotter of Au Bon Pain, a Boston-based fast-food chain, about how to build and improve boss-worker relationships. Another excellent and engaging resource on this concept is the book by Rosanne Badowski with Roger Gittines, *Managing Up: How to Forge an Effective Relationship with Those Above You* (New York: A Currency Book of Random House, Inc., 2003). Once dubbed Jack Welch's "secret weapon" by *Newsweek* in May 2000, Badowski shares her fourteen years of experience as executive assistant for the former CEO of General Electric and how to manage up under a tough boss.

<sup>45</sup> John G. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, "Managing Your Boss," *Harvard Business Review*, reprint no. 80104 (Boston: Harvard Business Review, n.d.), no page numbers are given [quote appears on the fifth page of this document].

<sup>46</sup> Mann, *Managing Your Boss*, iv.

Quite useful is Mann's last chapter, "Managing the Boss—Common Problems." Her tips are very down-to-earth for resolving nine common conflicts, such as "My boss is control freak" or "My boss promised me a raise/promotion but it hasn't materialized."<sup>47</sup> But her advice is not a fool-the-boss façade, be-the-boss-lapdog, or I'm-defeated approach. She has a chapter on "How to Impress Your Boss."<sup>48</sup> A reader could take this as a show-the-boss attitude and approach. Yet Mann is discussing relationship realities. She gives good suggestions about starting the working relationship: a positive first-day impression, wise body language, emotion management, and commitment to professionalism.

Without doubt, there are times when employees must speak up, not in defiance but in dialogue with the boss. Workplace strain and stress, especially mistreatment or abuse, require responses. In "Getting More from Your Boss,"<sup>49</sup> Mann explores topics that are difficult for most workers to discuss with their supervisor. Her tips are simple but right on target about practical issues such as asking for a raise, seeking promotion, requesting more challenging work, or dealing with work overload.

This work by Mann gives concise, concrete explanations and take-aways. Sometimes over-analysis leads to paralysis, a predicament that abused workers do not need added to any strains or stressful situations. However, this author brings clarity and practicality for employees. Mann's book is a superb starter in the literature, and it is foundational in grappling with this topic.

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<sup>47</sup> Mann, *Managing Your Boss*, 71-85.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 41-56.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 57-69.

### Hornstein

Harvey Hornstein has written an excellent book, *Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace*.<sup>50</sup> As a professor of social-organizational psychology, practicing psychotherapist, and management consultant, Hornstein, during eight years, gathered information from nearly a thousand working men and women for his book.<sup>51</sup> This is a very good discussion about bad bosses, their behavior, and how employees might relate to such leaders.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Hornstein neither makes nor implies any Christian or religious perspective on his topic. Yet this book, like others cited here, can help Christians understand their employment (i.e., work and workplace) and, in this case, their employer better. Improving one's awareness of work dynamics, issues, and relationships can help workers, especially those with problematic supervisors.

This author states there is a poison in the places of work today, as dangerous as chemicals: the toxin of bosses' cruelty. But he notes that wrong remedies are often recommended to those being harmed:

Many who have recognized the horrible effects of this toxin offer advice to the rest of us on how to deal with it. They tell us to avoid exposure—*change your work schedules so as to limit contact with your boss, and take special care to work around a boss's pet peeves*—or they advise us on how to live with the pain—*focus on your strength, they urge, or simply, meditate*. This advice is nonsense. . . . Abusive boss behavior itself is the problem, not the work patterns or reactions of the people it affects, and it must be stopped. There should be no victims.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Harvey A. Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses and Their Prey: How to Identify and Overcome Abuse in the Workplace* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, x-xii.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7. Italics are in the original text, unless stated otherwise.

## (2) Who is a bad boss?

How is a Christian or any person to understand if he or she is in an abusive employer situation? When an employee-employer relationship has strain and stress, questions arise and evaluation is needed. Is a supervisor being hard on or harassing workers? Can a leader's high standards be set and achieved without being abusive to employees? How does one differentiate between tough and tyrannical in a boss?

Hornstein provides excellent thoughts about making a bad boss diagnosis:

Distinction must be made between tough and abusive bosses. Abusive bosses who claim that "toughness" was required are engaging in a self-serving cover-up. . . .

At issue are not the standards set but the breakdown of civility and the assault on human dignity that can occur in the course of enforcing those standards. Tough bosses with high goals may cause their subordinates to feel insecure and uncertain of their ability to achieve the required levels of performance; but . . . there is clear evidence that the emotional and work consequences of that experience are very different from . . . being bludgeoned, belittled, and betrayed by bosses.<sup>53</sup>

Hornstein says various studies analyze bosses' behavior and workers' responses and document that respect is key to how a supervisor directs workers and their tasks,

A pertinent bit of evidence that hones these findings concerns the extent to which tough, stern bosses, who are not actively disrespectful affect their subordinates' reported levels of depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. *They don't*. The correlation is essentially zero. Evidently having a boss who is demanding but not mean-spirited or disrespectful has no bearing whatsoever on individual well-being.<sup>54</sup>

Another leadership challenge in today's business world is the issue of layoffs and how bosses execute personnel cuts. As Hornstein say, "Relentless restructuring, for many of the world's organizations, is this decade's credo."<sup>55</sup> That was a mid-1990s observation. But it is still true at the start of the twenty-first century, though now layoffs are

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<sup>53</sup> Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses*, 10, 12.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

sometimes called “re-engineering.” Hornstein says there is great hurt in such dismissals, but he posits that there does not need to be such humiliation of workers by bosses:

The resulting unemployment produces suffering for its victims and their families . . . despite that suffering, there is nothing in the eight years of data I’ve collected that suggests that firing people, even large numbers of people, causes workers to feel automatically disrespected. My respondents recognized that being fired was materially and psychological painful, but disrespect entered the picture only as a consequence of the manner in which the dismissals were handled. Kind, entirely painless ways to fire employees may not exist, but there are certainly some approaches to dismissal that are cruel and humiliating.<sup>56</sup>

A positive of this book is that Hornstein simplifies his categorizations of brutal bosses. Several other authors do not do this, thereby making understanding such bosses complex and confusing. Some classifications are needed, but fewer may be better.

His first grouping of bosses is those who reconcile their hurtful behavior toward employees (e.g., firings and layoffs) with their own self-image. They use distance and detachment with those whom they lead. Hornstein implies that desensitization by these bosses when downsizing personnel extrapolates into insensitive daily relating to people and identifies three such types:

Dehumanizers transform their victims into nameless, faceless numbers . . . [who] self-administer a kind of emotional anesthesia that diminishes their awareness of harm done. . . . Blamers protect their self-esteem by identifying the victims of layoff [or other mistreatment] as *deserving victims*. Rationalizers manage feelings which might damage their self-image by fanatically embracing the idea that the few must be sacrificed for the good of the many. This line of thinking justifies and rewards . . . ruthless treatment of workers . . . in order to *get the job done*.<sup>57</sup>

His second group of bad bosses includes people who are bad characters externally because of bad character internally:

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<sup>56</sup> Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses*, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 36-40.

A significant amount of abusive boss behavior is the result of enduring, malignant forces that exist inside the bosses themselves. . . . When sheer malevolence is response for the active disrespect of subordinates, it has nothing to do with uncontrollable explosion ignited by job-related stress. Instead, this abuse represents bosses' self-serving efforts to enhance their own feeling of power, competence, and value at subordinates' expense. . . . The cruel disrespect of workers that is born of bosses' characters has no reason or purpose other than the act of abuse itself. It is not a cathartic outburst produced by tension, nor is its goal the prevention of some real or imagined organizational adversity. . . . This is abuse for the sake of abuse. Malignantly motivated bosses experience temporary relief, and sometime even ghastly pleasure, because they have diminished another human being's sense of power, competence, or self-worth. And those sick gains simply whet their appetite for the next go-round.<sup>58</sup>

For simplicity, Hornstein describes this "malignantly motivated" group in three types or categories:

Conquerors [worldview] is a matter of power and turf . . . bigger is always better, and winning occurs only when another loses, [so] their hunger to defeat and humiliate others is insatiable. . . . [They] *bludgeon* subordinates. Performers fret constantly about their won competence. Unfortunately, for them and their subordinates, the lofty standards of ability that they pursue are often unattainable. . . . [They] *belittle* subordinates, and, as a result, feel (temporarily) more able. Manipulators wonder obsessively about others' views of their worth. Approval, particularly from supervisors, is all [they] really care about. . . . [They] work with greed and cunning to bolster their reputation by making others appear unworthy. Their signature strategy is to *betray* subordinates.<sup>59</sup>

He observes that bosses in this group may look different externally, but the three types are not dissimilar internally for their core need and questioning:

For all three, the core issue is an aggravating personal question that reflects their own special brand of self-doubt. Conquerors wonder, *Am I powerful?* Performers ask themselves, *Am I competent?* And Manipulators worry, *Am I valued?*<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses*, 48-49.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

Power, achievement, and recognition are the needs of these bosses and probably, in various ways and times in life, are characteristic for each of us. The literature and life confirms this. However, bludgeoning, belittling, and betraying others should never occur.

Many of the descriptions of Hornstein's types appear in most bad leaders. Thus, bad bosses are not easily categorized or typed. These characteristics probably exist in all terrible supervisors, just in various degrees or by a dominant type. In fact, types of abusive behavior, which is never excusable, may be partially situational too.

How can employees objectively assess if their bosses are bad? Hornstein has a great assessment instrument to do this, "The Brutal Boss Questionnaire." The author says he and his associate have utilized this questionnaire hundreds of times. This thirty-six-question tool and its scoring guide enable a worker to score a boss's behavior: not particularly tough, tough but not abusive, tough with instances of abuse, and abusive.<sup>61</sup>

### (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Hornstein describes the characteristics of bad bosses in terms of how they related to their workers. Though his discussion is not in developmental or chronological phases, it does help in the understanding of employee-employer interactions.

What are the characteristics of a bad boss? What are relational behaviors that employees should not expect or tolerate in their workplace? Hornstein says disrespectful bosses commit transgressions that fall into categories he calls "The Eight Daily Sins—deceit, constraint, coercion, selfishness, inequity, cruelty, disregard, and deification."<sup>62</sup> In synch with Hornstein's theme of workplace toxicity, we might call these eight deadly sins, for they can be damaging and deadly to employees' personalities and

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<sup>61</sup> Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses*, 151-54.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

productivity. Leaders declare policies and principles, but their patterns of behavior and interpersonal relationships demonstrates reveal their true character as a boss.

Though some other books do, Hornstein gives no attention to analyzing why brutal bosses are the way they are. This is a weakness of his work, as knowledge of a supervisor's background, personal and professional, might be useful for understanding a boss. Yet we cannot change another person, nor can we force a terrible supervisor into leadership therapy or personal counseling; only his or her superior can accomplish that. Rather, if we are employees, we have to deal in the here-and-now with the boss we have and respond to the existent day-to-day relationship.

This book, like a few others, identifies another area or method for abuse in the workplace: emails. Hornstein's chapter on this is "High-Tech Abuse: Coping with Electronic Assault."<sup>63</sup> He cites two methods of electronic abuse: flaming and gotcha. One is an active method of abuse; the other, more passive but also abusive and deflating.

Flaming is based on impulsive anger, a malady that is likely to infect bosses who suffer stress. E-mail messages that constitute flaming are rapid, rabid, and, when they come from bosses, harmful to subordinates' well-being. . . . Gotcha—Electronic monitoring systems represent *Gotcha* goals when their purpose is to provide justification for disciplining employees and to create a "paper trail" used to legitimize punishment . . . [giving] Big Brother Boss the capacity to watch all of the workers all of the time, without any of them knowing that it's happening. . . . Make a wrong move and they've *gotcha*.<sup>64</sup>

Again, the great value of Hornstein's book is the clarity and simplicity with which he categories and describes these abusive leaders. It appears Hornstein's two categories of brutal bosses divide according to a desire to have or not to have any attachments or connections with workers. The first group desires little or no connection with workers, so

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<sup>63</sup> Hornstein, *Brutal Bosses*, 83-100.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 86, 89.



they will have no emotional regret when they mistreat others. The second group wants contact with workers, so they can delight in the control and discomfort they lord over others. How leaders connect with followers and workers is critical for organizational success. This is certainly true for business bosses.

Hornstein's writing is neither precisely organized nor is it as prolific with boss types and worker stories as are other books covering this workplace problem. However, he has produced an excellent, clear, and easy-to-read analysis on the issue. His book lays a solid foundation to understand or begin to understand bad or brutal bosses.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

On this core concept, Hornstein's book was of no real help. He gives good thoughts about relating to brutal bosses, yet his approach is not a spiritual one.

**NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman**

Another top-notch work about bad employee-employer relationships is the book by NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman, *You Don't Have to Take It! A Woman's Guide to Confronting Emotional Abuse at Work*.<sup>65</sup> This thorough volume addresses workplace issues from women's perspective, challenging and demythologizing some assumptions and perceptions about working women. Though the study focuses primarily on emotional abuse of women, including sexual harassment, most of the principles can apply equally and effectively to male workers.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

This work is not one from a theological, spiritual, or Christian perspective. Hence, it does not pursue this question or provide any help on it.

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<sup>65</sup> Ginny NiCarthy, Naomi Gottlieb, and Sandra Coffman, *You Don't Have to Take It! A Woman's Guide to Confronting Emotional Abuse at Work* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1993).

## (2) Who is a bad boss?

NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman discuss bad bosses—with an interesting observation about terrible employers. In “Your Boss and Power,” they have a short section entitled “Women Bosses Are Different—Or Are They?”

“Women bosses are harder on their employees than men bosses.” “Men won’t work for women bosses.” “Women hate to work for women bosses.” So goes the mythology. We call them myths because studies don’t substantiate such beliefs, and some research contradicts them. . . .

Whatever your attitude toward women supervisors, you may know from experience that some women managers, like men managers, bully, intimidate, insult, and manipulate employees. Unfortunately, women bosses were among the most abusive supervisors reported to us.<sup>66</sup>

NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman are thorough in their analyses and applications. Their book has more than enough real-life stories, but those are brief and to the point. A great asset of this 379-page book is the thirty-four short practical exercises.

Very useful in understanding abuse is “Naming Emotional Abuse on the Job” and its exercises. It guides employees in assessing whether they are being abused by a boss and analyzing their current and future responses.<sup>67</sup> Questions focus on the worker’s sense of isolation, threats, degradation and humiliation, unreasonable demands, occasional indulgences, power dominance, monopolized attention, exhaustion and lowered competency, physical and emotional effects, and reactive thoughts and self-inventory. As these authors say, “Not everything that feels bad is abuse. In fact, you may not be suited to the job you have.”<sup>68</sup> We might suggest another possibility that could exist: maybe the employee is the problem—a topic considered elsewhere in this thesis.

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<sup>66</sup> NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman, *You Don’t Have to Take It*, 203-4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-36.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

### (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

The relationship with one's boss is the core of a bad boss problem. NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman analyze this not in terms of developmental process but in terms of the relational dynamics. These three authors point out that understanding not only one's boss but also the structural system and power within your organization is critical for any employee whose workplace relationship with a supervisor is terrible or in trouble:

You also need to analyze how people use power where you work . . . [and] the power structure that surrounds you. Knowing as much as you can about how your workplace functions increases your personal power, your power to act—and your power to cope with abuse.<sup>69</sup>

However, what if the organizational chart is followed but relationship influence occurs outside that structure? With equally strong conviction, these authors state a worker must be wise not only about formal power but also about informal power within a company workplace—what they call “shadow organization” (chapter 13).<sup>70</sup>

The problem may originate in the “shadow organization,” that is, the informal, practical power structure. The abuse you experience may be related more to informal relationships than the official chain of command.

Look at how your boss and each of your coworkers fit into the real power structure at work. . . . You may see that floor manager at your chain restaurant bypasses the branch manager's authority. He goes right to the owner of the company with ideas and complaints. If you're a hairdresser, you notice that your co-worker at the next booth has the owner's ear. You're puzzled about that until you find out her husband plays golf with the boss. When the junior partner is the senior partner's girl friend, the two of them probably don't exactly follow the written rules of office management. Knowing about these unofficial connections can give you clues as to how people achieve informal power. Those clues can also suggest the best person to hear your complaint about mistreatment.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman, *You Don't Have to Take It*, 193.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 207-19.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 207-8.

NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman also warn, in “Your Boss and Power,” that before taking action against a bad supervisor, every employee must distinguish and differentiate between the exercise of power and the abuse of power:

To help you choose the best strategies, we first suggest sorting out systemic injustice from emotional abuse, and legitimate power from illegitimate power. Then, if you’ve determined the boss has crossed over the boundaries of what’s fair, examining managerial styles can also help you to decide what to do. . . .

You can avoid frustration and confusion recognizing the differences between these two kinds of power. You recognize your boss’s right to organize your work (even inefficiently) but not to insult you or lie about you. You don’t have to accept personal belittling or capricious demands or intrusions on your private life, but if you want to keep your job, you probably have to accept legitimate orders.<sup>72</sup>

Employees do not just work; they work for a specific supervisor, section chief, director, or storeowner. To work best under a boss, especially if the latter is lousy, the second step of deciding how to relate most effectively with that supervisor must follow a first step of understanding that boss better:

Now, let’s assume you’ve decided that you face emotional abuse and not systemic injustice. Let’s assume the perpetrator of the abuse is your boss or supervisor and that he wields illegitimate power. Knowing something about the range of managerial styles can help you consider what approach you’ll take to stop the mistreatment.<sup>73</sup>

Knowledge is power. For an employee to respond effectively to an abusive employer, knowledge of the organizational system as well as knowledge of the boss’s style are both essential.

Sometimes employee mistreatment seems to be the workplace routine. At other times, coworkers pass off such behavior saying, “She’s upset because its performance review time,” “He’s dealing with a lot of personal problems,” or “The boss is just in a

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<sup>72</sup> NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman, *You Don’t Have to Take It*, 193, 197.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-98.

bad mood today.” No. If the problem is routine and repetitive, it must be named exactly, not numbed by excuses. Situation clarification is critical, say these authors:

To remove these misleading labels and to expose abuse for what it is, you have to put a name on it. Then you decide how to handle the problem. . . .

Emotional abuse at work is a pattern of intimidation, harassment, emotional manipulation, or excessive or illegitimate control of a worker.<sup>74</sup>

NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman—a clinical psychologist and teacher, a professor of social work, and a workplace writer-activist respectively—have combined to produce an exhaustive, excellent book on workplace abuse. For this thesis, it supported several points made in other literature, but it also offered new perspectives and different looks at issues. The caveat to note again: these three authors wrote for women. Nevertheless, this book’s principles and most of its patterns are definitely applicable for men in abusive workplace situations. When one is laboring under a bad boss, insight and understanding plus support and suggestions from all resources will be helpful and appreciated.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

These authors provided no discussion on this core concept about spirituality.

### **Belding**

Another extremely helpful book for this thesis-project was Shaun Belding’s *Winning with the Bosses from Hell: A Guide to Life in the Trenches*.<sup>75</sup> Similar to Mann’s book, this one excels on how to understand bosses, but it is even better in analyzing how to relate and respond to bad bosses, “from low-level supervisory positions right up to CEOs. They exist across the board through trade, retail, manufacturing, service,

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<sup>74</sup> NiCarthy, Gottlieb, and Coffman, *You Don’t Have to Take It*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Shaun Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell: A Guide to Life in the Trenches* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2004).

professional, public and private sectors.”<sup>76</sup> Well organized, this book has compact sections and provides practical recommendations. It is clear and quick to the point.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

The objective of this book, similar to the ones above, does not approach the understanding of work or the workplace from a Christian viewpoint. However, like some of the others, this work does provide an awareness about employment and employers that can enable believers to know their work setting much better. It is a great resource for this thesis for two reasons. First, it communicates excellent, though short, analyses about bosses. Second, it was outstanding in discussing how to work under a bad boss—what general response options boss- victimized employees have and what specific daily reactions such employees might express to an abusive employer.

(2) Who is a bad boss?

First, Belding explains that if employees find themselves under a bad boss, they must assess their situation. Understanding what is happening is paramount if anything new or good is going to happen. Gut and spontaneous responses work—only to get the employee in more difficulty or sent out the door! Belding declares to harassed workers,

You need a plan. You need to identify what the real problems are and what course of actions you take to create the best results. Solving Boss from Hell issues rarely involve a quick fix. . . . Be prepared to be both persistent and consistent in your approach.<sup>77</sup>

When working under a difficult leader, or even a good one, it helps to understand that person. What are her skills and abilities? What are her past experiences and successes? Has she had any failures along the way? Why and how did she get to her workplace position? How are her strengths and weaknesses manifested?

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>77</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, xvi-xvii.

Belding breaks down how to understand one's boss. He helpfully points out that there are different paths to supervisory positions: family (started business or inherited it), tenure (been around the longest), halo effect (good at something else), experience (not always aptitude), and who they know (not what they know).<sup>78</sup> To know the background of one's boss is to know and understand a little better that boss. Belding says, "Once you've figured out how these people get to where they are, the next question is why do these bosses behave so badly?"<sup>79</sup>

Without offering any in-depth psychoanalytical information about supervisors' past, Belding does describe three fundamental elements that influence most bosses from hell: motivation, expectations, and personality. He differentiates personalities and the way bosses behave into three categories, which again are helpful in their simplicity: aggressive, passive, manipulative.<sup>80</sup> Aggressive and passive personalities are easy to comprehend and identify; maybe manipulative can be seen as being aggressive while seeming to often be passive. Belding summarizes, "If motivation is the fuse and the boss's expectations of you are the thing that can light that fuse, then personality is the factor that determines the nature of the explosion."<sup>81</sup>

Belding has three general groups with several subgroups. As is obvious, some of his types match or mirror typologies of other writers on this subject. First, scary bosses include the exploder, the extortionist, the nasty and vindictive, the ethically and morally challenged, the blamestormer, and the credit stealer. Second, stressful bosses include the pile-on (work), the slave driver, the roadblock, the games master, and the invisible man.

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<sup>78</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, 4-5.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Third, annoying bosses include the condescending, the wet fish, the consensus seeker, the pet peeves (finder), kings and queens, the boor, and the grumpy. But whether there are so many types of bosses or not, there are certain behaviors and actions that bad bosses exhibit regularly.

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Belding does not describe any developmental phases for an employee's relationship with a boss. However, he does discuss thoroughly how to relate to and work for a boss, even a bad one. Therefore, some of his ideas appear under the next core concept question.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

The second and major focus of Belding's book, and what makes it foundational for this thesis topic, is his exploration of how to work under a bad boss. Though his principles may not be spiritual, they are practical and helpful. The relationship with a boss can be challenging, but Belding claims that an abused employee has few resources—no doubt a reason for writing his book:

I think that the hardest part of having a Boss from Hell is that very few resources are available to you for dealing with him. You can turn to friends and coworkers for advice, but their expertise in winning with these kinds of conflicts is rarely greater than yours. . . . Often you are left with only two options: just suck it up or quit.<sup>82</sup>

Of his twelve chapters, eleven discuss methods of responding or not responding to a hellacious boss. This is the strength of this book.

One suggestion Belding makes is that an abused employee needs to “find a champion,”<sup>83</sup> that is, another senior person in the company. Seeking out counsel and

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<sup>82</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, 27.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.



advice from an experienced person is always beneficial. Finding a mentor and a confidante can be invaluable for an employee, especially when the workplace situation is difficult. Having an advocate within the organization may pay dividends, too, possibly with one's boss who can learn from a third party about the worker's positive attitude, professional development, and productive contribution.

Belding's last chapter, "Stupid Boss Tricks and How to Beat Them," somewhat contradicts his earlier comments about not categorizing people, for here he lists nineteen specific types of "Bosses from Hell."<sup>84</sup> However, his descriptions and discussions are concise and concrete, so they were helpful as this thesis research developed understanding about bad bosses. For these nineteen types, he does give a good example and a productive or counterproductive way of responding to such bad leadership behavior.

One concluding point, made by several authors, is vital. The approach, attitude, and self-analysis by employees are pivotal to any progress in resolving or improving a bad boss situation. Unlike most writers who attack the problem of terrible leaders over workers, Belding gives a more optimistic picture of managers, supervisors, and even terrible leaders. He concludes by speaking about the number of bad bosses:

You might think, from reading this book [and many others!], that Bosses from Hell are rampant, raging lunatics who are an unavoidable part of life. That's not really the case. . . . In fact, the Boss from Hell, while maybe very real to you at the moment, truly represents only a small fraction of the bosses out there. The vast majority of bosses are decent people, fair and kind to their employees. They care about the people who work for them.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, 127-68.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

Then he comments about the nature of bad bosses:

Most of the Bosses from Hell you'll encounter are just ordinary people like you and me. They simply don't manage very well, that's all. They are underskilled and undermotivated people with hopes, dreams, fears, and facilities. They aren't born with some evil boss gene. They, like the rest of us, want to be successful. The encouraging part is that most of them, with the proper handling, can be made at least tolerable.<sup>86</sup>

One of the great strengths of Belding's book is that it gives a more positive perspective about our bosses, even the ones who behave badly, than do many authors writing about this problem. This indicates that there is hope for this situation and that employees should not despair about their difficult situation.

Belding believes a worker needs to understand the boss and be understanding. As he states in his introduction, the attitude and approach of the employee is the crux of any resolution and rapport:

The benefits of learning how to deal with a Boss from Hell cannot be understated. Work, that place where you're spending up to half of your life becomes a more enjoyable place. The stress stops spilling over into your personal life, and you find yourself having more fun outside the workplace. . . . Believe it or not, you might even begin to get along with your Boss from Hell. Even come to like him. Honest—it happens. We are all just people, after all, and with a little effort you might discover some common ground.<sup>87</sup>

He says, "Our own perspectives color our perceptions of our bosses . . . poor employer-employee relationships are often a self-fulfilling spiral that we unwittingly create ourselves."<sup>88</sup> Self-analysis, as objective as that can be, and confirmation checks with others about the boss are preliminary before declaring your boss is terrible. Maybe, just

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<sup>86</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, 170.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, xv-xvi.

maybe, you are the problem. Maybe you are or you are becoming the “Employee from Hell.”<sup>89</sup> Concluding his excellent book, he raises a fair question for query:

Before you run off in search of that perfect boss and the perfect job, make sure that you first take a good look at yourself. Try to identify what you can do to make your current situation better. Try to identify how much of the grief is actually being created, or made worse, by your own actions. . . . One seminar participant . . . told me that this was his sixth job in the past 10 years and that in every job he’d worked for a Boss from Hell. Maybe I was being cynical, but it seemed to me that the problem might not have been with his bosses.<sup>90</sup>

One unique aspect of Belding, compared with other writers, is that he first talks about what not to do when responding to this mistreatment mire. He has a chapter on “Common Yet Very Bad Strategies” in which he says “many of the strategies we use are not only ineffective but also sometimes painfully counterproductive . . .

CLMs: Career-Limiting Moves.”<sup>91</sup> These occur when a wronged worker speaks or acts before thinking or planning. This may be ignoring, irritating, or insulting our supervisor. Belding reminds us, “We forget that, while the boss isn’t always right, he’s still always the boss.”<sup>92</sup> The CLMs to be avoided are public embarrassment (disagree in private), being confrontational (aggressive), threatening (even indirectly), psychoanalyzing (categorizing, stereotyping, or pigeonholing others), and hiding (avoidance or deflection).<sup>93</sup>

Belding offers common-sense tips, too. Though one might question these, if they are done with an honest, humble spirit they are appropriate: credit your boss, praise your boss, and thank your boss. Overdone, these actions will be counterproductive. He also

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<sup>89</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, xvi.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 27-36.

says, as we would expect, “Perhaps the best way to minimize negative Boss from Hell experiences is to do your best to be a model employee.”<sup>94</sup> Who would not appreciate workers who take initiative, develop themselves, stay positive, are loyal to the boss and company, go above and beyond expectations, and set their own goals as well as those assigned.

Thus, Belding is arguing that having a negative approach may color our perceptions of our boss and of ourselves. Rather, as he said above, to be more understanding and possibly even positive toward our boss, even one who is not so good, may improve our relationship with that supervisor. Though analyzing a negative workplace issue, Belding does so with a positive, humorous spirit but not at the expense of bosses—an attitude that few other writers seem to have.

People with positive attitudes made a difference in the lives of those around them and the companies they work for. Not coincidentally, I’ve discovered that the people with positive attitudes also have dramatically fewer challenges with their bosses.<sup>95</sup>

This positive, gracious perspective should be the attitude, approach, and actions of Christians, who are accepted by God’s grace through the work of Jesus Christ, in dealing with anyone and everyone—including a bad boss.

### **Guillory**

Another useful book in learning about today’s spirituality in the workplace is William Guillory’s *Spirituality in the Workplace: A Guide for Adapting to the Chaotically Changing Workplace*.<sup>96</sup> Clearly written and organized, his work is reflective of other books now applying spiritual ideas to one’s work environment. It has some good

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<sup>94</sup> Belding, *Winning with the Bosses from Hell*, 44-45.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>96</sup> William Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace: A Guide for Adapting to the Chaotically Changing Workplace* (Salt Lake City: Innovations International, 2000).

insights about organizations and offers principles by which successful ones operate. This is more of a New Age approach to spirituality, rather than that of orthodox Christianity. But being representative of the new secular spirituality, this book is helpful.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Guillory gives no indication of faith, so this is not a Christian perspective.<sup>97</sup> But this book and its central themes emerged from a dramatic “spiritual experience” Guillory had, which he explains in the prologue:

I was abruptly awakened on the morning of October 3, 1985 at 1:30 a.m. I had an overwhelming urge to write “something.” I got out of bed, went over to my hotel room desk, and began writing without conscious thinking. Words flowed *through* me at a rate with which I could hardly keep pace. There were phrases and concept I had never heard of before, pouring into my consciousness. Then, just as abruptly as this process started, it stopped. So I went back to bed as if in a trance . . . I was subsequently informed that a channel had been opened to my inner self. . . . This experience was the origin of my personal exploration of spirituality and the conscious integration of it into my life. It allowed me to reconnect to a dimension of my inner self that I had earlier chosen to shut down. I use this connection as a continuing source of inspiration, wisdom, and guidance for how I live my life.<sup>98</sup>

Through his unique spiritual experience, he came to believe that spirituality is the key for businesses to succeed.

Today we find ourselves asking, what is the essential ingredient necessary to ensure the short and long-compelling success of an organization? This text presents a compelling argument for why spirituality may be that ingredient, when consciously acknowledged and channeled into an organization’s day-to-day operation.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> The biographical information given on Dr. Guillory (238-39) reveals a broad and distinguished career of academic studies and degrees, as well as seminar leadership around the world. It is interesting to note that the organization, Innovations Consulting International, Inc. that he started, published his book in Salt Lake City, Utah. One might wonder if he is from a Mormon background and theological perspective, though his book never discusses God, Christ, theology, or any scriptures.

<sup>98</sup> Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, iii-iv.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

But what is the spirituality that Guillory recommends? Concepts came to him in his trance-like experience and he wrote down them down, which challenged his past ideas and views. These phrases he received and wrote down about his new,

fundamental beliefs about reality such as: “mankind’s descriptions of life are all illusions;” “there is no meaning, only being;” “time is an illusion as are all other forms of man’s concept;” “look deep inside yourself, there is infinite wisdom;” and “oneness is essential realization.”<sup>100</sup>

He says in “Questions People ask about Spirituality and the Workplace”:

Q: What is spirituality?

A: Spirituality is that which comes from within, beyond the survival instincts of the mind. Each of us has a spiritual center, which is our connection to this source of inner knowing . . . our inner core self—beyond our programmed beliefs and values—that is the source of wisdom . . . passion, understanding, empathy, humility, compassion, and love.

Q: Is there a difference between spirituality and religion?

A: Yes. Spirituality is the source of an unlimited number of forms the human experience may take—meditation, prayer, Zen, environmental conservation, and treating others with respect, dignity, and as equals.

Q: What is the relationship between spirituality and work life?

A: Work life has become so demanding, fast paced, stressful, ambiguous, and chaotic that we are forced to seek values-based answer and ways of achieving personal stability from within. We have come to realize that our inner wisdom is the only source that will sustain our adaptation and stability in the long run.<sup>101</sup>

Throughout Guillory’s book, there are no references to God. This is generally true of today’s literature on spirituality in the workplace. In his Appendix A, he reveals more of his imprecision or rather his inclusiveness and syncretistic view about spirituality. His practical quiz “How spiritual are you?” has no words about the divine or even about faith and belief in a higher power or a supreme being in whatever ways people might understand God.

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<sup>100</sup> Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, iii-iv.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., Appendix A, 217-18.

For Guillory, spirituality can take many forms and have many expressions, theologically and practically:

Spirituality is our inner consciousness. It is the source of inspiration, creativity, and wisdom. That which is spiritual comes from within—beyond our *programmed* beliefs and values. . . . Spirituality is a way of being that predetermines how we respond to life experiences; whereas, religion deals with the incorporation and implementation of organized belief systems. Religion is actually *a* form that spirituality takes in practice. Spirituality is the source behind the form. Spirituality may also be expressed as meditation, Yoga, T'ai Chi, prayer, empathy, compassion, and by treating others with dignity and respect.<sup>102</sup>

His spirituality is eclectic, which does not match the unique claims and content of the biblical testimonies and Christian faith:

Spirituality is the life force that permeates and drives a Living Organization. . . . Spirituality is derived from inner consciousness—beyond systems of belief, whether these systems are taught or learned. . . . In fact, the spiritual dimension is where all religious belief systems merge into one, without distinction.<sup>103</sup>

Guillory points out, correctly, that there is an inner hunger and searching by people in our world and workplace:

So, whether it is young people seeking spiritual answers; mystical fireflies on a Nissan commercial; Buddhist monks telepathing on an IBM advertisement; movies like “Meet Joe Black,” “Phenomenon,” and “What Dreams May Come,” TV series such as the “the X-Files,” “Touched by An Angel,” and “Millennium,” or values-based leadership—the open expression of spirituality has become an ingrained part of our personal and professional lives. Its necessity for workplace adaptation will only intensify in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>104</sup>

Does Christ’s church understand this? Do we Christians who work in the secular workplaces of this world grasp this development? Will we followers of the

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<sup>102</sup> Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, 33.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., x-xi.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 40.

incarnate One engage our colleagues, where they are and in what they believe, praying that that the Spirit and Immanuel might come to them?

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Neither one of these core concept questions for this thesis-project is addressed by Guillory, as his work centers on spirituality in the workplace.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Most of Guillory's book, five chapters, discusses his "five key elements in integrating spirituality into the workplace: *people, service, organizational self-awareness, wisdom, and the new leadership* . . . to produce a high-performing organization."<sup>105</sup> He says business leaders should have deep concern for people, ethical values, and crises prevention. He refers to such concepts and perspectives as "humanistic core values."<sup>106</sup>

Spiritual principles should be humanistic principles. However, is there a difference? If so, Guillory does not distinguish between these two. In fact, he seems to believe them to be identical. Humanistic goals and concerns are good for human beings and for their workplace organizations. Yet, that fact does not necessarily make them spiritual; it certainly does not make them biblical, Christian, or the crux of the gospel.

Another asset of Guillory's work is that he concludes each chapter with a practical exercise. For example, at the end of chapter 2, "Spirituality—the Source of Wisdom," he gives "Ten Exercises to Reconnect with Your Spirituality."<sup>107</sup> He recommends meditating, getting outdoors, holding a baby, doing visualization exercises, talking to your subconscious mind before going to sleep, walking on a beach at night,

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<sup>105</sup> Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, xii.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 56-57.



watching a morning sunrise, and visiting someone worse off than you. One may not fully agree with Guillory's spirituality, but some of his suggestions are commendable.

Guillory postulates some interesting ideas. They are insightful about spirituality in the workplace, a concept and philosophy that he and many other authors and speakers advocate today. But, this is not biblical faith, not the gospel, and not Christianity—it is symptomatic of religious pluralism and syncretism in our culture. It is a humanistic approach to workers and the workplace, which has some legitimate points. Guillory suggests “our inner cored self”<sup>108</sup> is our spiritual center and source. But this is not the *ex deus machina* (“from God”) entry into human history and human hearts by the revelatory God of the Old Testament and the incarnational God in the New Testament.

### **Gilbert**

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Clearly it is not a Christian perspective, but this book adds a little to our understanding of this new movement of spirituality in the workplace. It expresses a great concern and compassion about how human beings treat each other, in life and in the workplace. Matthew Gilbert, toward the end of *Take This Job and Love It: How to Find Fulfillment in Any Job You Do*,<sup>109</sup> says:

Everyone has tales of difficult bosses or quarrelsome co-workers or feeling trapped in a situation over which they had little control. In facing these challenges and striving to resolve them by means of spiritual tools, we start building the character that makes us whole while bringing meaning to what we do. It's an empowering process. . . . Indeed, the “spiritualizing” of our work proceeds to the extent that we ourselves become spiritualized.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Guillory, *Spirituality in the Workplace*, 217.

<sup>109</sup> Matthew Gilbert, *Take This Job and Love It: How to Find Fulfillment in Any Job You Do* (New York: Daybreak Books, 1998).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Like Gillory, Gilbert does not discuss these two topics.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Gilbert gives no spiritual principles for those working under a bad boss, but he, like Guillory, draws spiritual ideas and applications from Eastern philosophers, religious leaders, and cultural experiences. Discussing the importance of service, he describes the carefully prepared, detail meticulous, other-focused, and gracious Japanese tradition of Chado or The Way of Tea. Quoting a Japanese Chado teacher, Gilbert says the true spirit of this ceremony has four characteristics: harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility. This ceremonial act of serving tea expresses in attitude and action how people should respect and relate to each other. Then, in his next chapter, he says:

In many respects, mining the spiritual in our work is not so different from just “being a good person” or “doing a good job,” expressing such qualities as patient enthusiasm, attentiveness, responsibility, humility, and skillful performance. It’s doing unto others as you would have others do to you.<sup>111</sup>

In his book’s introduction, Gilbert talked about or around the definition of spirituality and a spiritual path. Then he summarizes about what it means to be spiritual:

What many of us have forgotten—or never realized—is that we are spiritual by definition (at least as insofar as the origins of language are concerned). Being spiritual is a fundamental part of our nature that has neither beginning nor end, something that cannot be turned on and off like a faucet. The word spirit comes from the Latin *spiritus*, which literally means “breath.” . . . So spirituality, “the quality or state of being spiritual,” would suggest that the very act of breathing qualifies us as spiritual beings, at least at the core of who we are.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Gilbert, *Take This Job*, 92.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., xiii.

Human beings are spiritual beings. But Gilbert may be only partially correct about the etymological derivation of the word. It does come from Latin, but does it not originally originate from the text in Genesis, where we read the Lord God “breathed” (Hebrew, *ruah*) breath into the new formed creature, who then became a “living being.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, it is our spirituality as beings that distinguishes us from animals, who themselves are also breathing. Our breath and life were and are to be linked to the Creator God.

Again, this is a difference between general spirituality and specific Christianity. The former seeks to develop meaningful, spiritual life from within one’s self, whereas the Christian faith affirms and testifies that such life comes from outside us. Jesus may have this text in mind as he tells Nicodemus that to see and enter the kingdom of God, one must be “born again” or “born from above” or “born of the Spirit.”<sup>114</sup> Gilbert’s book is of value only because it gives insight into the new, secular spirituality influence our culture and our workplaces today.

### **Sherman**

This resource, from a committed Christian, is a video series with a workbook by Doug Sherman, *Your Work Matters to God: A Video Series with Student Workbook*. It does address the boss problem precisely along with other specific topics.<sup>115</sup> This is a good series, with eleven short units for a small group or class setting; each lesson uses fifteen minutes for a group leader’s introduction, thirty minutes for viewing the video featuring Doug Sherman, and fifteen minutes for group discussion. This material is not

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<sup>113</sup> Genesis 2:7.

<sup>114</sup> John 3:1-15, specifically 3:3-8.

<sup>115</sup> Doug Sherman, *Your Work Matters to God: A Video Series with Student Workbook*, workbook ed. Ray Blunt and John Mauer (Garland, TX: Career Impact Ministries and E. Films and Video, Inc., 1989) and four VHS tapes (Richardson, TX: Grace Products Corporation, 1989).

lengthy, but it is good. The videos and the workbook should generate good discussion about being Christians in the real world of work and workplaces.

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

Sherman's lessons and content condense workplace issues, reflection, and response options but still have solid content.<sup>116</sup> Specific topics this series covers include integrity at work, time demands, biblical success and ambition, work habits, conquering stress, effectively sharing Christ with coworkers, and cultivating relationship at work.

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Sherman does not address either of these two topics in his video series.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

This video series and one of its sessions is the only material found that deals directly with the core concept of spiritual principles for working under a bad boss.

Session 8 of this eleven-unit series is "Getting Along with Your Boss Biblically."

There is very brief case study in the workbook to introduce this topic, in which a Christian nurse seeks you out:

Her supervisor is a very difficult person to get along with. She is always gruff and regularly unkind. No one likes her. . . . Kathy has two children and a husband. . . . Normally she works the day shift 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. But when she does, the supervisor makes the nurses stay sometimes until 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. . . . [Kathy] wants to follow Christ, but her supervisor is making life very hard. It's not just the long hours, it's the ungrateful and disrespectful attitude she is trying to cope with. She comes to you for advice.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Sherman coauthored a thorough discussion for Christians about work and the workplace, which is the first core concept in this thesis's literature review. See Doug Sherman and Williams Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1987). This is an excellent book on the first core concept, but it does not address the other three concepts. For that reason it was not analyzed here.

<sup>117</sup> Sherman, *Your Work Matters to God*, 109.

Sherman's video presentation plus the workbook focus on an employee's attitude toward the boss and challenges an employee may have. Sherman and the workbook point out that key for this session is the employee's attitude: "that the proper attitude toward those we work for is the same as the attitude we should have toward Christ."<sup>118</sup>

Appropriate Scripture verses and some questions paralleling the video presentation are in the workbook. After the video is shown, the group discusses these questions:

(1) Is it ever appropriate to criticize your boss behind his or her back? To his or her face? (2) How could some of your practical ideas for achieving excellence at work (last week's assignment) affect your relationship with your boss? (3) What are some practical ways you can use to sort out direct and indirect participation in wrong-doing at work?<sup>119</sup>

This session in Sherman's video series concludes with a homework assignment, challenging group participants to reflect on their attitude and actions with their workplace boss:

Examine, honestly, your relationship with your boss. Do you relate to your boss as to Christ? Are you going along with something that is wrong at work because you don't want to oppose those you work for? Write down your conclusions and try making some changes in your approach and attitude if necessary.<sup>120</sup>

### Stevens

Another great resource on Christianity in the workplace is Paul Stevens's *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*.<sup>121</sup>

(1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?

This work was very useful for this thesis in developing background understanding and conceptual frameworks about Christians working in the world. It is a

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<sup>118</sup> Sherman, *Your Work Matters to God*, 108.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

thorough treatise on the general theme that there should not be dichotomies between “laity” and “clergy” but that all Christians are ministers, gifted and equipped to serve the church and the world. All followers of Christ are to do the work of Christ, not just clerics. The author discusses the much-forgotten topic of “vocation” and “calling.” He also explains the various biblical roles and ministries of God’s people, reaffirming that Christians are a called and sent people by God into the world. Stevens’s final sections cover the powers that resist God and us, as well as how we are to live theologically by orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy.

Stevens says the work of believers is involvement by faith in the work that God is doing in the world. He points out:

Kingdom work does not exempt Christians from significant daily work. So the so-called housetables in the letters focus mainly on the relationship of slaves to masters, rather than on what kinds of work are appropriate for Christians. There is no list of prohibited or commended occupations in the Bible such as promulgated at various periods of church history.<sup>122</sup>

Saying this a different way, he reminds us that many of the imperative statements in the New Testament letters about the reciprocal relationship between masters and slaves emphasizes their duties, not their rights.<sup>123</sup>

(2) Who is a bad boss?

(3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?

Stevens does not speak much to these core concepts and questions. But one point he does make has an indirect application for the employee-employer relationship.

In chapter 9 about ministry, “Resistance—Grappling with the Powers,” he discusses powers that resist God’s work through believers, such as spiritual and demonic

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<sup>122</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 116.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 117.

forces as well as structural and systematic evil. He does not, and we should not, deny these manifestations of resistance. He notes we need to remember that human beings fell from grace in the Garden and that we as people marred by sin cause evil, whether through structures or in relationships. We also need to remember that any bad boss situation involves two people and both have sin-infected flaws. Thus, both are in need of God's grace and wisdom, maybe even forgiveness, for any resolution and reconciliation.

(4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Stevens does not give any specific workplace principles concerning a bad boss. But he does remind readers that God's redemptive work in Christ is moving eschatologically toward a final future, explaining that this gives us hope for our work in the present. Stevens affirms that our work on earth is beneficial here and it will be in heaven, too, as Christ's return will usher in the full re-creation by God and the Spirit into a new heaven and a new earth. As he declares with hope and joy—as should we:

This brings new meaning to those whose toil is in so-called secular work: the arts, education, business, and politics. They too are shaping the future of creation in some limited way just as are missionaries and pastors . . . all work has eternal consequences, whether homemaking or being a stockbroker. . . .

A completely renewed creation . . . involves the pacification of the powers . . . there are tribes, the city, beauty, and creativity, kings and nations, aesthetics, and order. This is the ultimate goal of the whole people of God. This is what vocation, work, and ministry are for, what it will become, and why it has meaning now. Only heavenly-mindedness can make us of earthly use and save us from despair about work in the world.<sup>124</sup>

Stevens's book is a great resource and provides excellent concepts to understand some Christian perspectives on work in the world. However, it did not offer any direct or specific ideas or instruction about the bad boss problem.

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<sup>124</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 237-38.

## **Conclusion**

As the literature review shows, there are many approaches to workplace problems, including discussions of “the spiritual” nature of workers and organizations.

Business consultant Alan Briskin quotes a manager of a large conglomerate:

We’re so busy moving people around, trying to meet our deadlines, trying to influence people to believe in what we’re doing, that we just don’t want to really look into anybody’s eyes and see that they have souls. We should start with the premise that we have souls. But souls are difficult to manage. And even if we talked about people having souls, it would probably be from a corporate viewpoint.<sup>125</sup>

In a good critique on work issues, *Stress in the American Workplace*, DeCarlo and Grenfeld say spiritual programs are one method of addressing workplace problems:

Among the most recent attempts at corporate stress management is one that focuses on modifying employee responses. It is a group of “New Age” productivity improvement programs that include such activities as hypnosis and firewalling, as well as transcendental meditation and yoga. The gist of these programs is the notion workers can learn to empower themselves to think innovatively and to work more productively and that stress will be reduced as a by-product of this innovation.<sup>126</sup>

They elaborate on these New Age programs:

One typical approach is meditation, which is believed to suppress the fight-or-flight reactions. Typical meditation methods include transcendental or Siddha meditation (which involves chanting a mantra in order to foster calm), yoga (which is basically a system of exercise for attaining bodily or mental control), and a variation called “The Quieting Response” (which is a combination of deep breathing and muscular relaxation combined with visual imagery in intervals of ten or fifteen seconds to attain spiritual peace).<sup>127</sup>

It is good for everyone to be empowered and have self-esteem, to develop moments for mental and emotional calmness (cf. Christian “centering prayers”), and to

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<sup>125</sup> Alan Briskin, *The Stirring of the Soul in the Workplace* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998), x.

<sup>126</sup> Donald T. DeCarlo and Deborah H. Gruenfeld, *Stress in the American Workplace: Alternatives for the Working Wounded* (Fort Washington, PA: LRP Publications, 1989), 136-37.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 135.



find “spiritual peace” in life and at work. As Jesus explained to his disciples and any who would follow him, “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”<sup>128</sup> How can workers, or anyone, find their soul and peace in life? The psalmist says, “Be still and [note the rest of this Scripture] know that I am God.”<sup>129</sup> Augustine observes in his *Confessions*, after his struggles as a young man, the relationship we are meant to have with God and the peace that brings: “For Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee” (book 1, chapter 1).<sup>130</sup>

Spirituality in the workplace has become a theological topic and even a business topic for books, seminar, retreats, and tapes in the past ten to fifteen years. Many spiritual terms and ideas for companies and workers now appear in literature. These are interesting; some are insightful. However, these concepts are neither the same as or completely compatible with the Christian faith or how a Christian views work, nor do they yet speak to workplace relationships such as laboring under a bad boss. So, are there Christian perspectives that address workplace problems, especially the bad employee-employer relationships?

Nevertheless, finding any resources that specifically address, from a Christian perspective, the workplace problem of working for a bad boss was quite a problem! Summarizing, current books take a strategic look at the workplace, not a tactical one; they are helping map the forest, not examining strength or sickness of a few trees. This is not to say that they do not offer good applications and examples for those in the workplace; they do. However, their purposes were not to recognize and reflect on

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<sup>128</sup> Matthew 16:26.

<sup>129</sup> Psalm 46:10.

<sup>130</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. Edward Pusey, vol. 7, part 1, The Harvard Classics (New York: P. F. Collier & Son, 1909-1914). Bartleby.com, 2001. <http://www.bartleby.com/7/1/> (accessed September 28, 2007).

specific problems, such as promotion or pass-over, pay raise or demotions, or performance reviews. Consequently, the subject of working under a bad boss goes unaddressed.

In an excellent summary article entitled “Workplace,” in a large anthology, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*,<sup>131</sup> Robert Banks observes:

A Christian perspective on the workplace cannot be summed up under any one phrase, such as enhancing its attractiveness or making it more congenial, improving its safety or bringing greater justice into it, making it more humane or helping it to become more caring and compassionate. Any of these may be relevant at one time or another, often one more than another, sometimes several at once. All are important and at different times may have priority. The main thing is to have a good understanding of the total environment in which we are operating, along with a sharp sense of what is the most pressing concern at the present.<sup>132</sup>

Recent literature shows that the problem of bad bosses and working for them is prevalent in today’s workplaces. Employees who labor under a bad boss would benefit from some Christian reflection and literature on this subject. This thesis-project seeks to stimulate thinking and learning about this workplace problem. Maybe this will encourage someone to write about this topic. Explained next, in chapter 4 of this thesis, is the design and development of a small-group Bible study curriculum using David and Saul as a case study to explore worker-bad boss biblical principles and applications.

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<sup>131</sup> Robert Banks, “Workplace,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-to-Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1133. R. Paul Stevens and Robert Banks, eds., *The Marketplace Ministry Handbook: A Manual for Work, Money and Business* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005) is a shorter Stevens-Banks version (317 pages versus 1166) with sixty-nine articles from the former volume.

<sup>132</sup> Banks, “Workplace,” 1135.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT DESIGN

#### **Design**

Foundations and convictions are the building blocks for this thesis, which does have some limitations.

#### **Topic**

This thesis-project research is “Working Under a Bad Boss: Exploring Biblical Principles and Practical Applications from the David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship.” This project sought to address concerns of this thesis’s problem and setting (chap. 1), to build on concepts of the theological framework (chap. 2), and to use content from the literature review (chap. 3).

The research reading and reflection focused toward a practical project that might help the church connect and influence better the business world—specifically to assist Christian employees in today’s workplaces with a challenging situation: working under a bad boss. The result was creation of a small-group Bible curriculum for individual study and group discussion on David and Saul, either in a Sunday or a congregational Christian educational setting or in a midweek small-group environment. This chapter explains the design and development of this project.

#### **Foundations**

The concepts and structure for this thesis-project developed from a foundational triad: the theological and biblical framework, the literature research and review, and the Scripture texts on David and Saul. Simultaneously these three provided theoretical and

practical points summarized and reviewed here. Four core questions guided the research reading, the case study analysis, and the curriculum development:

- (1) How are Christians to understand their employment and employer?
- (2) Who is a bad boss?
- (3) What is the developmental relationship with a bad boss?
- (4) Are there spiritual principles for working under a bad boss?

Many authors state loudly—and it should be apparent to employees—that persons laboring under a bad boss must not only be aware of but also have good analysis about their predicament, if any improvement or change is to occur. Conceptual understanding is key in these areas: your organization, your boss as employer, yourself as employee, your relationship with your boss, and your response options.

One concept emerging from study of the literature and Scripture, too, at least hypothesized here, is that employer-employee relationships seem to move through some developmental phases. These phases or stages are *start* (hired or promoted into a job), *success* (good performance and achievements), *stress* (friction and tension with one's supervisor for some reason), *support* (confidante for advice plus validation and verification about situation), possibly *subversion* (disloyalty or undermining the boss), *selection* (employee response options), and *successor* or *re-start* (maybe succeeding one's boss or at least becoming a boss over some or a few other people).

Books about bad bosses usually discuss what response actions an abused employee can take. The range of methodological options varies widely: from doing nothing to taking legal action. In this thesis-project these choices are simplified: *defeat* (taking abuse and just doing nothing), *defiance* (taking an aggressive or even destructive

attitude toward one's boss), *dialogue* (trying to discuss and work out the problem), and *departure* (leaving the job to distance one's self from the bad boss).

Above are actions a worker might take. But what attitude will an employee have in such stressful situations? Some spiritual principles for Christians under a bad boss also materialized. Even in stressful workplace settings and laboring under a bad boss, we are called to seek God's mercy for our workplace situation; submit with respect to our boss; have a sincere heart in obeying our boss as we would Christ; obey and work for our boss, whether the work is seen or unseen; serve wholeheartedly our boss as if we are serving the Lord; and serve our masters, earthly and heavenly.

### **Convictions**

Two primary convictions buttress this thesis-project.

First, God's Word has principles for our world. Basic to this thesis-project is conviction that the Word of God written is a "living and active"<sup>1</sup> revelation from God, "inspired [or, God-breathed] and useful for teaching."<sup>2</sup> To those hungry for spiritual nourishment or parched in life for meaning, in past ages or new ages, God says,

Come, all you who are thirsty, come you who have no money. . . . Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy? . . . Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. . . . As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields food for the sower and bread for the eater, so my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 55:1-3, 10-12a.

Thus, “blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, God’s Word has relationship patterns and realistic principles for our workplace interpersonal relationships. Our response to God’s revelation is to explore, discover, and apply those truths prayerfully with the help of the Spirit for our lives in today’s world.

The large majority of Christians work in secular, not Christian settings. In fact, that was true of most faithful women and men in the Old Testament and New Testament:

By no means do we wish to diminish the value of those who are called to careers in professional ministry. . . . But let us keep in mind that at least three-fourths of the men and women from the Bible whom we call “heroes” were not in “full-time ministry.” They [some might say] “wasted their time” working in “secular” jobs. . . .

Jesus spent close to ninety percent of his earthly life wasting [author’s sarcasm here] his time wielding a saw, hammer, and chisel.<sup>5</sup>

Wherever we are, including, or maybe especially, in the workplace, we are to be men and women of the Word in belief and in behavior. We are encouraged by James: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”<sup>6</sup> We have the example of Ezra, who “devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.”<sup>7</sup> We have Paul’s exhortation to Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”<sup>8</sup> These texts challenge and exhort us, as followers and disciples—as workmen and workwomen—of the Word incarnate, to study and apply the written Word. Maybe the best biblical

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<sup>4</sup> Revelation 1:3.

<sup>5</sup> William Carr Pell and Walt Larimore, *Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 32-33. This book is an excellent, stimulating, and practical book with fresh ideas about Christians and evangelism in the workplace—about “being a witness versus witnessing” (77).

<sup>6</sup> James 1:22.

<sup>7</sup> Ezra 7:10.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15.

example for us as Christians, when we hear ideas in worship or in workplaces, is the Bereans, who “received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”<sup>9</sup>

We must use God’s Word for our lives in today’s world. We need to consider and to critique theories—whether from the teachings of Christian writers, the thoughts of the business world, or the themes of spirituality in the workplace—about how we are to live in, relate to, and influence our culture as Christians. Jesus Christ’s admonition to his followers applies to his words and to the entire Word of God, as we build our lives, our careers, and our workplace jobs: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house—yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it is essential to explore Scripture for principles about life relationships such as the employee-employer one, especially when one’s boss is bad. What does the Bible say and suggest to workers in such predicaments? It is the underlying question for this study. Thus, this project’s primary goal is to develop a small-group curriculum using the David-Saul employee-employer relationship to explore biblical principles and practical applications which might assist those working under a bad boss.

A second conviction for this thesis is that God’s Word discussed in groups has synergistic benefits. There is great gain when people study and discuss the Bible together. Doing Scriptural study on one’s own is good and should be done consistently. Doing

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 17:11.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 7:24-25.

such study with other believers in community, fellowship, and prayer may be even better as it allows the Spirit to work synergistically.

With rare exceptions in the Bible, looking at and learning from Scripture is done in group settings. Moses taught the Torah to people gathered.<sup>11</sup> Ezra instructed Israel with the help of some interpreters.<sup>12</sup> Countless times Jesus provided teaching and dialogue to groups,<sup>13</sup> in homes,<sup>14</sup> and even in workplaces and walk places of his day and culture.<sup>15</sup> He did so in places of worship such as the temple<sup>16</sup> and in synagogues,<sup>17</sup> where Scriptures were read by one person and then discussed by those there. Paul went to places of worship<sup>18</sup> and to places of work and business<sup>19</sup> to dialogue and discuss ideas, beliefs, spiritual things, and the gospel with other people in their workplace setting.

### **Purposes**

The design of this project has three purposes. First, it seeks to convey the boss-worker developmental stages of the boss-work relationship and the spiritual principles for Christians with a boss. Second, it seeks to explore practical applications for daily workplace relationship between a boss or supervisor and workers. Third, it seeks to encourage study participants in their spiritual growth as followers of Jesus Christ and

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<sup>11</sup> Exodus 34:29-32; Deuteronomy 5:1ff.

<sup>12</sup> Ezra 7:6a, 10; Nehemiah 8:1-8.

<sup>13</sup> The Gospel of Matthew records many such examples. Interestingly, Matthew divided his Gospel account into five sections, possibly to parallel the five sections of the Torah. Each section finishes with identical phrases after Jesus discoursed and dialogued with groups of people: mountainside crowd sermon (7:28-29 after 5:1-7:27), disciples on ministry (11:1 after 10:1-42), crowd parables on the Word and the kingdom (13:53 after 13:1-52), disciples on the kingdom (19:1 after 18:1-35), and disciples on eschatology (26:1 after 24:1-25:46).

<sup>14</sup> Mark 2:1-12; 3:20-35; Luke 24:28-49.

<sup>15</sup> John 4:1-38; 5:1-15; Luke 24:13-27.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 3:1-6; 11:15-17; 11:27-12:44.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 4:14-30.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 16:13-15; 17:1-12; 18:7; 19:8.

<sup>19</sup> Acts 17:16-34.



their fellowship and mutual support with each other as Christians (i.e., sharing, caring, and praying together) through both individual learning and small-group discussion.

As described in chapter 3, there is a plethora of publications about leaders and leadership, good and bad, but almost no literature about workers or about being followers. Yet, most people in the workplace are employees not employers, not organizational leaders, not company management, and not CEOs. Looking at business and management books today, it becomes clear that a new workplace worry is the phenomenon of bad bosses. Therefore, the project focuses on that biblical case study *par excellence* on this subject: David serving not as a leader of Israel but as a staff member and employee under King Saul.

Two secondary purposes exist in this thesis-project.

First, many employees now or in the future will supervise, direct, or guide others within their organization and at their workplace. Therefore, this study curriculum also touches briefly on the situation and time when a follower supersedes his or her own supervisor and becomes a boss. In fact, this study of the David-Saul relationship is both chronological and cyclical. That is, it commences with Saul starting as a new leader or boss over the young nation of Israel, and it concludes with David becoming Saul's successor and the next king-leader-boss for God's people.

Second, although most people who work will have a bad boss at some point, that might not be the case currently. Nevertheless, this study of the stress-filled, struggling David-Saul situation can enable study curriculum participants to assist and support friends or coworkers who may now labor under a bad boss. Learning from the study overall and from Jonathan particularly can help us help others in the workplace.

### Limitations

This thesis-project crystallized through many mentor-advisor interactions and much reading and research. It developed from consideration of Christians in the marketplace, through examination of leaders and leadership in the workplace, and finally to focus on workers in a bad boss setting.

Some issues of our workplaces are observable in this Old Testament study, but others are not. For example, William Diehl points out a constant dilemma for middle managers: support management (boss) or labor (workers):

Pity those persons who daily work at the interface of labor and management, the first-line supervisors. These are the persons who are called upon to see that management's plans or directives are carried out – sometimes against their own convictions. These are the persons who are called upon by the work force to communicate its complaints and wants to a management that is sometimes not interested in listening.<sup>20</sup>

Also, Diehl's contrast of an employee's style versus the organizational culture does not really fit in this case study either. Though Old Testament people's personalities no doubt differed, integration into the growing monarchy of Israel and under its first king seems rather black and white. Soldiers might be in battle for a while, but they were not deployed for six to eight months from their homes and families—David and his men even moved their families when he departed from Saul.<sup>21</sup> Coworker competition for promotions might have been a factor between Jonathan and David, but the former was gracious and accepting of the latter. Women in the work force were not an issue for the Israelite army; they stayed and worked at home. Fighting ethnic minorities or area tribal groups did occur periodically.

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<sup>20</sup> William Diehl, "Conflict, Workplace," in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-to-Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 213.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Samuel 30:1-6.

However, the Old Testament worker-boss issues of David-Saul do not fit or address many modern employee-employer workplace issues. Complex technologies linking hundreds of people, by email and interdepartmental networks, was not the work world of Saul and David. Expanding workweeks with increased hours on the job for more productivity was not a concern under the new monarchy. Commuting was not hard; people walked to work or set up shop outside their homes—and they walked into battle. Fair or minimum wage was not an issue; a worker worked for the offered pay. No national human resource department provided worker assistance or advocacy. Though Jonathan's tension in loyalty between his father the king and his friend David<sup>22</sup> is a bit similar to that of a middle manager relating up and down the organizational structure, David was a colleague and coworker, not a subordinate, of Jonathan.

So, this study curriculum has limits and does not cover all employee-employer issues for today's workplace. But there are enough similarities so that as the project's Bible study sections proceed, the interactions and reactions among David, Saul, and several others reveal some principles from the Old Testament texts about working under a bad boss in our times.

### **Development**

This project developed through several stages and steps, which can be adapted by others who might lead this study. This curriculum is for a small-group setting, either Sunday school class or a midweek group, or maybe even as a workplace lunchtime study (though sixty minutes are needed). The concept formed in skeleton stage with a small Sunday school class at First Presbyterian Church, in Norfolk, Virginia, in the fall of 2006. Out of that embryonic effort, a full curriculum began to develop. In early 2007, an

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Samuel 30:1-42.

opportunity to use this thesis-project opened at Third Presbyterian Church in Norfolk, Virginia. The project study occurred July through early September 2007, while this author served as temporary supply pastor during the church pastor's five-month sabbatical leave.

To prepare for this sabbatical substitution, the author attended several ministries of this congregation, including Sunday morning worship and Sunday school classes. Eighteen months earlier, the author became acquainted with the congregation while serving as their worship leader and guest preacher when their pastor was gone. Members of this small fellowship are warm and welcoming, and most are quite faithful in their church programs.

However, they seem to utilize the Bible very little themselves. Not many bring their Bibles to worship or to Sunday school classes, and few use the pew Bibles during the reading or exposition of the sermon texts by the preacher. In adult class settings and at their men of the church breakfast Bible study, they do not seem experienced or comfortable with Bible study discussion format or methodology. Most members seem more at ease with someone instructing or lecturing them with only a short time at the class conclusion when the teacher usually asks, "Are there any questions?"<sup>23</sup> They are committed to the Word but need some training and encouragement in small-group Bible discussion.

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<sup>23</sup> The small-group model utilized for this thesis-project's curriculum discussion and application of the Bible texts and topics is not the lecture or leader-focus method. It is the inductive study method. In this process, the group members, facilitated but not taught or lectured by a leader, are encouraged to examine, explore, discuss, and apply the Bible themselves. The group leader is a discussion stimulator, facilitator, and gatekeeper, not the answer expert. The group participants learn and experience how to analyze, interpret, and apply the Scriptures for themselves and with each other.

### **Plowing the Soil**

#### **Church Pastor**

To initiate this project, the author asked the pastor, the Reverend Doctor Phil Oehler, whom he would replace for five months during his sabbatical leave, about his idea to offer a Bible study on “Working Under a Bad Boss” using the employee-employer David-Saul relationship. We brainstormed this idea in January 2007, and he thought there would be some interest. However, he wanted to discuss this with the Christian education committee chairperson, and then he wanted the author to present the “Sunday School Class Proposal—Summer 2007” (Appendix A) to the session (i.e., ruling elders).

#### **Church Leadership**

When the author presented the ten-week study proposal to the session members in March 2007, they encouraged offering the class. However, they asked the author first to talk directly with the two Sunday school class teachers and with their class members, to discern the interest in this possible study and to determine whether there would be any opposition if another adult Sunday school class occurred over the summer.

### **Sowing the Seed**

#### **Sunday School Classes**

In April 2007, the project’s author met with Sunday adult classes to present this study concept and curriculum. One class, a lecture-style format with the teacher using published materials, decided to continue its summer schedule and material as planned. The other class, a discussion-based group, decided to accept this David-Saul proposal and postpone their material for this study in July through August 2007. This decision also freed their rotating teachers from summer preparation and leadership responsibilities.

### Congregation Members

For three weeks prior to starting this new adult class, the Sunday worship bulletins had an announcement summary about this new offering. The Sunday worship liturgist also gave brief explanation about the study during announcements.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study incorporated two learning formats and processes: individual study and small-group discussion. A study book is used to guide participants through topics and texts and to give participants a booklet in which to record their discovery and discussion insights, principles, and applications.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Individual Study**

Individual participants use a Participant's Study Guide booklet that was prepared as part of this thesis-project (see Appendix B). Each week this study guide has five days of Scripture readings and reflection questions. By having five days and not seven, participants can catch up with any undone daily unit during the week. The goal is to get participants into the Word before the small group meets to discuss and apply what individuals discovered in the Scriptures and from the Spirit in each weekly theme and daily topics.

#### **Small-Group Discussion**

The participants come together once a week for a small-group discussion and interaction session. At this meeting, a group leader facilitates group review and

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<sup>24</sup> This thesis-project methodology follows a small-group process and a study book format that the author experienced as a new Christian at the University of Florida in the mid-1960s, using an *IVCF Guide to Campus Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), 1962). After many reprints, it became *Grow Your Christian Life* (1990). Now many Christian organizations and publishers use such a format for small-group Bible study materials (e.g., InterVarsity Press, Campus Crusade for Christ, Navigators' NavPress, Bible Study Fellowship, Neighborhood Bible Studies, and even mainline denominational publishing houses).

discussion with the participants using the Participant's Study Guide and a Leader's Guide for suggestions and tips. The Participant's Study Guide contains three or four summary questions for group interaction, during which participants share, discuss, and apply what they discovered in their own study of God's Word for their workplaces.

### Meeting Setting

This project occurred in an adult class setting lasting about sixty minutes. Participants and the group leader sat around a large table, so everyone could see each other and handle Bibles and study guides easily. This physical set-up creates an atmosphere that is group-oriented and less-leader focused, encouraging more participant discussion and interaction. Two tables were pushed together to make a large table, around which twelve to sixteen people could meet. This set-up also facilitated the use of one's Bible and each person's Participant's Study Guide. Coffee was usually available.

### Welcome

After a few moments of allowing participants to greet each other, the group leader starts the small group. Everyone is welcomed warmly, especially any new participants who are introduced or asked nicely to introduce themselves.

Though taking roll is too formal, it is helpful to record discreetly those coming each week (i.e., via a roster, especially if the group is medium to large). Keeping names, phone numbers, and addresses—and noting attendance—can lead to friendship follow-up, a group social function, or even pastoral care as needed. A small group, even Sunday school classes, often becomes a welcomed and needed fellowship experience for many members of congregations, especially in those churches that have large memberships.

### Opening Prayer

The meeting opens with prayer by the group leader or a participant. The group leader might in the beginning adapt one of the week's daily ending prayers. This will draw participants' attention to them and show how they can be used with the daily topics.

### Discussion

The group leader facilitates discussion and interaction of the past week's readings, themes, topics, and participants' learning notes. This facilitator also assists group members in discovering and making applications for their workplaces. The Leader's Guide gives helps and suggestions about how to lead a small-group discussion. To repeat earlier statements: the group leader is a facilitator of discussion and a stimulator of interaction, not a lecturer of knowledge or an imparter of right answers.

The design and purpose for a small group of Christians is that it would become an open, honest, supportive, and prayerful fellowship. In such a setting, the participants can grow, mature, become confident, and learn to express their faith and their questions as followers of Jesus Christ and in fellowship with other Christian sisters and brothers. They also mature in loving and praying for one another.

### Closing Prayer

Closing with prayer should be an integral element of making personal applications of biblical principles. Praying together at the end of each unit focused on the study topic just completed and/or to shared workplace boss problems. The Spirit who inspired God's truths and teaching to be put into Scripture is the same Spirit who can breathe those teachings into believers' hearts, minds, and lives. Thus, we must pray into our lives our biblical discoveries and applications. We must also bring to God in prayer



our specific workplace issues, problem relationships, or coworker concerns. The group leader can pray, and may need to do so the first few gatherings. However, part of leading and disciplining others in Christ is helping them become more comfortable with and regular in praying aloud in groups with other Christian believers.

### **Materials**

Two components comprise this project's study materials. First, each week for five days individual participants have study themes and topics with Scripture passages to read in addition to four or five questions with spaces for notes. This devotional study time takes about thirty minutes each day. Second, once a week these participants meet in a small-group setting facilitated by a group leader to explore, discuss, apply, and pray about what they each had learned individually during the past week. The small-group interaction can be done in a 60-minute period such as a Sunday school class, or a more in-depth discussion could be accomplished if the group participants can meet for 90 to 120 minutes.

This two-pronged methodology generates individual Bible study and learning plus small-group fellowship, learning, and prayer.

### **Participant's Study Guide**

The Participant's Study Guide leads members of the small group as they read, reflect on, and record their observations, interpretations, and applications from the biblical texts. Then participants meet in a group setting to discuss the main themes, key principles, and applicable lessons they discovered from the David-Saul relationship to their own work situations. This interaction will reveal new insights, ideas, and even issues that individuals may not have discovered.

Resources for this group were the Bible and the Participants' Study Guide, which was the study curriculum (Appendix B). The latter was given out the first two meetings, and participants brought their copy each Sunday. Extra copies were available if newcomers or visitors attended. Most everyone brought their own Bibles, but extra ones were available.

### **Leader's Guide**

Most small-group Bible study guides today include leader notes for the one leading the discussion. A Leader's Guide (Appendix C) was developed so that this study might be utilized by other small groups, Sunday school classes, or business fellowships. This Leader's Guide has two components to assist a group facilitator leading this curriculum. First, it provides helps and suggestions about how to lead a small-group discussion. Second, it provides discussion group questions and brief comments on the scriptural texts and daily study topics.

### **Helps on Leading a Small-Group Discussion**

In the first section of the Leader's Guide, there are suggestions about how to lead a small group. The guide gives practical tips and time-tested principles plus several helpful references. Group dynamic topics are addressed: preparation by the leader, prayer for participants, ground rules for discussion, asking text-focus and study-guide-based questions, calling on participants (or being careful about calling on them), generating good discussion and group member interaction, preventing a question-answer rut between leader and one participant, and handling controversial comments or off-the-topic contributions.

### Helps on Discussing Biblical Texts and Workplace Topics

In the second section of the Leader's Guide, there are some brief notes about the biblical texts and about the daily or sectional topics. The setting of the Scripture passage, locations, chronology, and background information assists the leader guide the group discussion and application of the text. Suggestions about workplace settings and employee-employer relationships can stimulate or supplement participants' thinking and talking together. The group leader's task is guiding discussion, not giving answers.

The Leader's Guide preparation did use and adapt a few biblical commentary notes. These provide some information to the leader on background and textual issues, possible questions, or "problems" that may arise in discussion. However, this study's focus is to be the texts themselves, not in-depth historical-critical analysis of Bible passages. Thus, these notes are for use primarily when textual issues or challenging questions arise. The group leader should not ignore participants' questions on difficult texts or interpretation, but the leader should not digress long from the study questions and focus topics, as the Leader's Guide explains. In-depth dialogue and discussions on a particular question or difficult issue should take place outside the small-group setting, which has time constraints and needs to stay focused on the passages provided.

The inductive Bible study method encourages participants not to seek or bring in commentary comments or assistance. This is true before a person studies, analyzes, dissects, re-examines, and reflects on the Bible texts. Again, the goals of this Bible study and project were to encourage, enable, and expect participants to dive into the Bible and dig out lessons, learning, and life applications for themselves and with each other. This contrasts with an approach that looks to or relies on extrabiblical resources and/or the

group leader “for the answers.” It is the Scriptures that we believe to be God-inspired and authoritative, not the commentaries. As Johnny Cash is quoted as saying, “The Bible sheds a lot of light on the commentaries.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Other Materials**

Other handouts to the participants at the first group session were used to start this small-group study and these handouts were collected for re-/post-study comparison. One sheet outlined the phases or stages, suggested in chapter 2 above, for the development of worker’s relationship with a boss, “Employee-Employer Development: Prep for David-Saul Study” (Appendix D). Based upon that chronological schema, “Class Schedule and Topics (Eleven Sessions)—Topics and Themes” (Appendix E) was distributed to show the small-group meeting dates and Scripture texts. Finally, the group members were given a more detailed outline of curriculum topics and texts, “Weekly Topics and Scripture Texts” (Appendix F).

### **Evaluation**

A project or a plan, once designed, developed, and delivered, needs evaluation to determine its success. This is true for this thesis-project. What are its results and outcomes? Evaluation methods are explained here. Feedback, suggestions, and recommendations are summarized in chapter 5, “Outcomes and Evaluations.” From that data and the author’s reflections, chapter 6, “Summary and Future Studies,” offers perspectives on this curriculum and possible related studies for the future.

Different methods of evaluation assess this project. Not only is it important to assess the course subject and its curriculum materials, but it is equally important to assess

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<sup>25</sup> Christianity Today, *Men of Integrity*, March/April 2002, “Junk-Food High”—*Theme for this Week: Go to the Source*. March 27, 2007. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/moi/2002/002/mar/27.27.html> (accessed August 20, 2007).

the conduction of this project. Design and development of a project may be great, but if delivery of it is poor then the desired results and outcomes may no doubt miss their mark.

Feedback comes from both participants and the group leader, especially the former.

### **Participants**

#### **Pre-Study**

At the first group session, several evaluative instruments started this class. After the group leader's welcome and self-introductions by participants, the study concept was explained. Then participants anonymously filled in the below-named sheets, one at a time, for pre-study anticipation and evaluation assessment. Discussion of participants' feedback from these evaluation tools comes in chapter 5, "Outcomes and Evaluations":

- "Pre-Study Expectations—Participants' Feedback" (Appendix G)
- "Pre-Study: Your Most Difficult Boss—Participants' Feedback" (Appendix H)
- "Pre-Study: David and Saul" (Appendix I)
- "Pre-Study: Your Organization, Your Boss, and You" (Appendix J)

#### **Post-Study**

For post-study evaluation and some comparison with the above pre-study input, participants were asked by a cover letter (Appendix K) to fill out three post-course questionnaires, combined into a three-page, six-sided questionnaire to review several facets of this small-group experience as the "Post-Study Evaluation" (Appendix L):

- "Post-Study Evaluation—Course, Materials, and Leadership"
- "Pre-/Post-Study Evaluation: David-Saul"
- "Pre-/Post-Study Evaluation—Your Organization, Your Boss, and You"

The order in which these evaluation questionnaires were presented is deliberate. The sequence was to help participants review the study and what they have learned, as they completed the questions and made their comments. The questionnaire covers three categories: an overall evaluation, knowledge of David and Saul, and workplace understanding. The second and third questionnaires were distributed at the beginning and the end of the course. The first questionnaire seeks the participants' overall critique of this curriculum.

### Course

The course evaluation section starts with the general question, How did you like and use the principles of this course? Its assessment questions cover:

- Course Topic
- Small-Group Discussion Format
- Purposes:
  - #1 Examine Bible principles in David-Saul employee-employer relationship
  - #2 Explore Bible applications for our workplaces and bad boss relationship

### Curriculum

The curriculum evaluation section starts with the general question, How useful were the materials and topics?" Its assessment questions cover:

- Participant's Study Guide
- Biblical Texts, Questions, and Study Themes/Topics
- Topics and Discussion for Workplace Applications

### Conduction

The conduction or leadership evaluation section starts with the general question, How well was the study conducted by the group leader? Its assessment questions cover:

- Discussion Format and Interaction
- Study and Application of Biblical Texts
- Personal Sharing and Praying for Each Other.

### **Group Leader**

The group leader also assessed the project through observation while conducting it and by interacting with the participants throughout the small-group study. The group leader made notes and some modifications throughout the course and did a self-evaluative reflection when the course was complete.

The above evaluation methods and assessment tools plus the group leader's reflection and self-evaluation all provide the data for the project's "Outcomes and Evaluation" in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION

#### **Project Outcomes**

The project for this thesis was a small-group Bible experience conducted as a Sunday school class (July 1, 2007 through September 2, 2007) at Third Presbyterian Church in Norfolk, Virginia. This class met ten times Sunday mornings, from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m., just before the morning worship service. Because this project occurred over the summer, some very committed participants did miss a couple of sessions because of family vacation travel, and the last session occurred on Labor Day weekend.

The group regularly consisted of approximately twelve people, though a couple others came periodically. Three visitors attended during the summer, including two older teenagers with their mother. Participants included men and women, married and single, ranging in age from late thirties to early sixties. Most currently had jobs, but several were retired. Their work experiences included being school teachers, a volunteer hospital worker, a hospital human resources director, an apartment housing manager, a fast-food franchise staff, a civil engineer, administrative assistants, a Navy officer, a Navy chief petty officer, and a museum curator. A mentally challenged, wonderful young man in his forties, whose parents were congregation members, came several times; he worked regularly at a public school cafeteria and loved “helping children smile,” he said—and coming to the small-group study. The variety of workplace and boss histories made participant interaction very interesting and stimulating.



The outcomes and results of this field test of the project were excellent. First, the participants showed an increasing commitment, both to growing spiritually and to attending regularly. They wanted to study and discuss the Scriptures, and they became more and more excited about seeing how to apply God's Word in their world, even their workplace situations. Second, many shared several times how much they liked the small-group Bible discussion experience, for the interactive learning from each other and for fellowship support with each other. Most had never participated in an inductive Bible study group, and most indicated they grew in their enjoyment of it.

Outcomes of this project are reported and critiqued in three sections below according to the participants' feedback: course, materials, and leadership; David-Saul knowledge; and understanding of one's organization, boss, themselves, and their relationship with their boss.

### **Course Critique**

A cover letter and questionnaire (Appendix K and Appendix L, which shows both questions and responses) were mailed to all small-group participants, with a leader-addressed return envelope and postage. Out of thirteen sent out, ten were returned anonymously. Not every question was answered by each participant. Appendix L shows the three-part critique questionnaire and all written feedback from the participants in the discussion group.

Scoring. Here are participants' scores by rating options on questions:

1	2	3	4
not relevant or applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

## (1) COURSE—How did you like and use the principles of this course?

Course Topic: David-Saul Relationship and Working under a Bad Boss	3.2 out of 4.0
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Small-Group Discussion Format	3.36 out of 4.0
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Purposes #1 and #2:

Examine Bible principles in David-Saul employee-boss relationship	3.5 out of 4.0
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Explore Bible applications for our workplaces and bad boss relations	3.5 out of 4.0
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## (2) MATERIALS—How useful were the materials and topics?

Participant's Study Guide	3.7 out of 4.0
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Biblical Texts, Questions, and Study Themes/Topics	3.44 out of 4.0
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Topics and Discussion for Workplace Applications	3.44 out of 4.0
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## (3) LEADERSHIP—How well was the study conducted by the group leader?

Discussion Format and Interaction	3.9 out of 4.0
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Study and Application of Biblical Texts	3.6 out of 4.0
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Personal Sharing and Praying for Each Other	3.7 out of 4.0
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Comments. Appendix L records all comments from the participants for each category and question. Below are sample remarks from above question categories, which had a Comment section after the scoring section:

“I loved our study, and I can understand David and Saul much better now, as I think of them in terms of working under a bad boss.”

“Lots of helpful information about personalities, leadership principles, and the need to be absolutely honest even when we're wrong.”

“Pastor Bill made our study so much fun and helped the Old Testament Book come alive and related it to today in everyday relationships.”

“This study is very relevant in our lives today—not only in employer-boss relationships, but with difficult persons in your life.”

“This was a new concept in studying Scripture; we learned a lot.”

“Sometimes we forget that our bosses are human and fallible. It is good to be reminded that David trusted God.”

“Our workbook made it so easy to follow and exciting to do our weekly lessons. I didn’t want to miss a class.”

“Excellent, but I confess that I didn’t get to all of the daily readings.”

“I enjoyed the classmates sharing their stories about times of stress with bad bosses and how they handled those times.”

“Answering questions helps me to think about what I have read.”

“Leader asked stimulating questions and encouraged everyone to participate by really listening to their comments.”

“Reading text aloud was so good with this group.”

“We always had prayer and were encouraged to pray for each other through the week.”

“If we had had more time, it would have been nice to pray more.”

Final Comments or Recommendations? These are sample comments that concluded this section of the critique:

“Bill’s ‘Participant’s Study Guide’ was very well prepared. At the time I started the study, I was experiencing a similar bad boss situation. I was able to relate to this. God is protecting me like he did David, I’m sure.”

“[Your] teaching style is very accommodating, compared to others who try to make a class feel like you are in a theology class!”

“Bill, I am really tired—Today was the first day of school classes, so my responses may not be what you hoped for. But this Bible study was worthwhile and thought-provoking.”

“Group study was very good. Everyone opened up.”

“An interesting and a very informative program.”

“I’m sorry this is ending—I pray you will stay in a pastoral position where your preaching and teaching will be used to God’s glory.”

### **Assessment—Course**

From this feedback, it appears that participants enjoyed the David-Saul study and saw that it had principles for them not only in bad boss relationships but also in other situations. They expressed excitement about understanding that God’s Word does apply to their daily lives and challenges. The group members appreciated the Participant’s Study Guide as a booklet leading them through the Scripture passages and enabling them to have a document of references and notes to retain. The inductive Bible study and small-group discussion proved to be an excellent learning format, though the daily reading assignments were probably too long.

### **David-Saul Knowledge**

Another evaluation, a true-or-false quiz, compared participants’ pre-study and post-study learning and knowledge of David and Saul. In Appendix L’s second section, two columns compare participants’ answer choices for each question pre- and post-study. Increase in knowledge and understanding is clearly shown by answers to questions 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10; slightly improved scores show for questions 1, 7, and 8; and “declining” scores appear for questions 3 and 9. For example, question 7 answer (c) is true about David wanting to kill Nabal, who had dismissed David’s request for some food to give his men<sup>1</sup> but not true of David’s attitude and actions toward Saul.<sup>2</sup> Also, question 6 answer (a) is not exactly true, for David sought support from Jonathan, who was within “Saul’s organization” (i.e., the administration structure plus the family structure).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 25.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 24, 26.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42.

### **Assessment—David-Saul Knowledge**

The short true-false quiz indicated some increase in participants' knowledge and understanding of David and Saul. However, it is noted that some questions are written with very small disqualifiers, possibly too detailed for the average congregant. Of course, never was the study goal to teach to the test. That short true-false quiz was given to participants at the study's first session primarily to stimulate their learning interest about the David-Saul relationship.

### **Understanding Your Organization, Your Boss, and You**

This third section of the mailed course questionnaire sought to stimulate participants' review of curriculum concepts and what they had learned through analysis of their workplace situation. Appendix L records the various and interesting feedback, comments, and insights from the participants.

A brief, numerically-scored section asked participants to assess their knowledge of their organization and their boss. Answers (and scoring marks) were: almost none (1), little (2), some (3), and a lot (4). Interestingly, the scores from participants were 3.9 out of 4.0 on their organization but only 2.66 out of 4.0 on their boss.

The short-answer questions help employees assess their understanding in such areas as their organization's history and development; their boss's background, styles of leadership and thinking, and strengths and weaknesses; and successes and even possible failures; and their own strengths and weaknesses plus successes and failures. Questions also asked about the developing relationship with their boss; whether it had any strains or stresses; and if their boss and/or the relationship is bad, what response options they had with pros and cons of each choice.

Participants gave various boss descriptions. Some spoke of good bosses. Others reported remarks like those in the literature about bad bosses and their behavior, of which a sample follows (Appendix L has all responses):

“Terrible—nearly non-existent knowledge on working with people.”

“Sometimes lets personal life interfere with his responsibilities.”

“Never willing to stand up for employees.”

“Too nice.”

“Later I learned he had difficulties as a youngster with his father.”

“Always controversy wherever she is.”

“Alienated most female employees soon after arrival. Alienated me by destroying my company loyalty.”

“Sometimes when managers that were put in place were not fair, I went into the restroom for a prayer break.”

“Folks are frustrated—workers work harder; slackers work less.”

“He’s not right for this job, and his ego is too big— but he doesn’t realize either one.”

On their response options and choices, here are some remarks from participants:

“Talk it over with them.”

“Ask for clear delineation of duties—and realistic ones.”

“Ignore him or defend myself.”

“Leave or suffer quietly.”

“Outlive him!”

“Quit—but I need the money and it takes time to look for another job.”

“Talk it over, and pray for God’s help to deal with this problem.”

One general summary comment suggested continuing to work well and look to the future:

“In most places, employers will let you make of your job what you want—particularly if you don’t complain about your salary, learn things, take broad advantage of every opportunity for/with your skills. Who knows, someday someone may notice and recognize your contributions to the organization—and who knows, maybe one day you may become king . . . or in my case, queen! ☺ ”

### **Assessment—Organization, Your Boss, and You**

Participants, in the data feedback, scored their knowledge of their organization much higher than knowledge of their boss. Two conclusions are possible. First, it is much easier to gain information about the company than about one’s supervisor. Second, though employees should never aggressively investigate their supervisor’s life, background, successes, or failures, they will benefit by learning about their boss better to understand that person and their boss-worker relationship. The small-group members, according to their feedback and discussion session remarks, gained insights about the response options available when working under a bad boss.

### **Project Assessment**

Based upon the author’s evaluation and especially the participants’ feedback, this project is assessed as successful.

The participants report good scores on sections with numerical rankings. Their comments are quite positive about the course, the materials, and the leadership. They also frequently commented verbally how much they enjoyed this Bible study discussion of David and Saul, through the employee-employer relationship. They were thoughtful in their study insights, caring and supportive of each other’s workplace challenges, and increasingly united with each other in this small-group process.

As the group leader, the author sensed the participants were having a good spiritual growth experience. By producing and leading the Bible study curriculum and by exploring and applying scriptural principles in his life with these brothers and sisters in Christ, the author learned a great deal. This unique David-Saul employee-employer study, individually and with this small group—and this thesis-project—is one of the best faith growth experiences the author had personally and professionally in recent years.

This bad boss topic and the David-Saul Scripture texts are highly recommended for Christians, congregations, and pastors.



## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY AND FUTURE STUDIES

#### **Project Summary**

Christianity is not the only spiritual perspective in workplaces. In the past, workers kept their religion private. Now, spiritual ideas are not only being discussed openly but also are promoted by company management, as Nash and McLennan state: “some form of spiritual practice can be found in most business settings today.”<sup>366</sup> But the review of literature, while revealing many books on bad bosses and spirituality, did not produce significant materials on spiritual principles or a pattern for Christians working under a bad boss. Thus, this project offers a case-study small-group curriculum on the employee-employer relationship, based upon the interactions between David and Saul.

This was a dynamic small-group Bible study experience of David and Saul. First, it was exciting to do this study. Three residency periods, with two mentor-advisors and with other colleagues in ministry, broadened one’s knowledge about the business world and work-faith perspectives. The reading research provided deeper understanding of the bad boss problem in many workplaces today. Second, it was truly stimulating to analyze the biblical David-Saul relationship from the employee-employer bad boss perspective. The small-group interaction in the Scripture texts was very stimulating, with real-world applications for all the participants. Third, the Christian fellowship, developed by this project small group through the Word, sharing, and prayer, was spiritually beneficial to us all—group participants and group leader.

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<sup>366</sup> Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 4.

### **Lessons Learned**

Several significant lessons learned emerged out of this project.

#### **Importance of Small Groups**

First, this experience reaffirmed how the small-group experience is vital for spiritual growth in individuals and in a congregation. These participants sincerely loved both the Bible study and the fellowship group interaction we had. Most of them probably had not participated in such a discussion sharing group; they truly grew in their faith and in their confidence in the Lord through our time together. Pastors and Christians leaders should generate and nurture small groups for synergistic benefits in spiritual growth of and fellowship among believers.

#### **Reading Abilities of Group Members**

Second, we usually read aloud passages of Scripture before discussing them. This is usually good, as it makes everyone follow along in the text carefully. However, a group leader must always be sensitive to those who are uncomfortable reading or who cannot read. One of our participants was in this latter category.

#### **Engaging Participants on Texts and Topics**

Third, in the group study sessions, we would explore questions from the Participant's Study Guide. Sometimes we used the previous week's daily ones and sometimes its summary ones to explore the text themes and application topics. Most participants shared from notes they had made during the week, which was encouraging. However, asking individuals by name what they discovered through a certain question or text is good, but one must be careful, especially in the earlier sessions, to ask more fact-based questions so as never to embarrass a group member. Even if some participants did

not complete all the daily studies, they still can explore the texts read aloud and the topic questions along with everyone else present in a given session.

### **Changes to Consider**

#### **Week #11 Added**

First, as the small-group experience was reaching its end, the author realized he had not been very precise about principles for Christian employees under a bad boss. Group participants did have excellent discussions about the pattern and principles discovered in the David-Saul relationship. However, Scripture offers many verses about slaves and master. Therefore, the author prepared a more careful analysis of some biblical exhortations for Christian workers under a bad boss or any boss. This resulted in Week #11, “Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss,” with six days of individual study on six principles and then a group discussion to review and apply those six principles. This additional unit is added to the Participant’s Study Guide (Appendix B).

#### **Length of Time for Group Discussions**

Second, the 60-minute time period of a Sunday School class hour can work for this curriculum and its Participant’s Study Guide—but barely. We struggled at times to finish on time. A 90-minute or 120-minute time period, such as a midweek home meeting and fellowship group, would be much better. Then participants would have more time for discussing the texts, sharing personal situations, and praying together.

#### **Length of Content for Individual Daily Studies**

Third, although no participant mentioned this, it may be that the content and time required for the individual daily studies were too long. They are certainly not a “One-Minute with God” devotional or a 15-minute read-pray-and-go study. One objective was

to guide the group members straight through the chapters about David and Saul, not just extract certain sections of the texts. Of course, at the group discussion time, we could not discuss all five daily studies. The author summarized some day's study topics, and we discussed those if participants so desired. However, the leader chose two or three topics and Bible texts for the group to read aloud, review, and apply together. Selection of which topics and texts to use in the group must be considered by the group leader as the group process, interaction, and study develop over time.

#### Engaging Quiet Participants

Fourth, facilitating the discussion and interaction went well. However, a little more intentionality would have drawn out one or two quiet people at times. A general, more factual question about the text or a question relating to a person's workplace can encourage one to speak and gain confidence about sharing in a group setting. For example, the group leader could ask, "I wonder what you think about this, Charlie?" But usually everyone spoke up and shared, including sometimes ideas that needed redirecting back to the text.

#### A Social Get-Together

Fifth, the fellowship generated by this study was a blessing to us all. However, in retrospect the author believes it would have been beneficial to have had a social get-together for all our participants, maybe after four or five sessions. Such a fellowship time (e.g., a covered-dish supper at someone's home or progressive dinner at several houses) could have helped deepen our commitment to and friendship with one another outside the church setting.

### Contemporary Supportive Materials

Sixth, the author did use some of the boss assessment tools mentioned earlier in this thesis. But a few extra teaching elements could have been inserted into a couple of the sessions, as a change of pace instructionally and to support sessions topically. For example, these contemporary media items might be good supplementary elements for some sessions such as playing songs about employees (e.g., Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Someone") or showing a clip of a bad boss scenario from films (e.g., *Working Nine to Five*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Wall Street*, *Working Girl*, *Swimming with Sharks*, *Office Space*, *Caine Mutiny*, or *Moby Dick*). Other applicable materials might be television shows (e.g., *The Office*), current articles (e.g., the *Fortune* magazine cover article, April 30, 2001, about how New York Yankee coach Joe Torre deals with team owner George "The Boss" Steinbrenner), some comic strips (e.g., "Dilbert"), or cartoons (e.g., from *The New Yorker*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Business Week*, or *The Wall Street Journal*).

### David's Psalms

Sixth, it might be good to incorporate some of David's psalms, appropriate to his situations with Saul, into some of the daily lessons. These psalms express personally and poignantly the thoughts and feelings of someone on the run or fearful of those who are trying to harm him, yet seeking and resting in the Lord God. Such psalms might be suggested as additional reading (e.g., a couple were in the Participant's Study Guide), and/or verses from them might be incorporated into the daily closing prayer.

These are examples of psalms with title ascriptions describing David's episodes with Saul: Psalm 18 (in the wilderness and in a cave, hiding from Saul), Psalm 34 (pretending to be insane before Abimelech), Psalm 52 (when Doeg reported to Saul

where David was hiding), Psalm 54 (when Ziphites told Saul where David was hiding), Psalm 56 (when Philistines seized him in Gath), Psalm 57 (when he fled from Saul into a cave), Psalm 59 (when Saul sent men to watch David's home), and Psalm 142 (in a cave).

Others, while having no such ascriptions, may express David's heart when faced with Saul's harassing and hunting for him: Psalm 17 (running and hiding from Saul's men), Psalm 23 (distancing himself from Saul), Psalm 26 (cf. his dialogue with Saul in 1 Samuel 26), Psalm 63 (wandering in Desert of Judah), and Psalm 70 (a cry for God's help).

### **Value to Others**

#### **Participants**

Based upon the literature, the problem of bad bosses in the workplace seems to be huge. Some authors even suggest it is epidemic. But the David-Saul employee-employer interaction provides great biblical texts to explore and apply into our modern work relationships. Likewise, based upon project participant responses, this small-group discussion curriculum of this biblical saga is highly needed and applicable. The members of this small group grew in their understanding, as the study continued, of God's perspective about their workplace and realizing that he is present and powerful with them in their daily work relationships. Such encouragement should be true for members of any other group that tried this study curriculum.

#### **Leaders**

Christian leaders should address specific issues and problems in the secular business world, for that is where most Christians labor. There are now superb writings about faith and work, which leaders should know and introduce to others (e.g., a

discussion group on the book by Nash and McLennan). Similarly, those teaching and disciplining others should use small-group studies on workplace topics. Some future related Bible studies are suggested below, and the bibliography lists some good work-related study guides. Not to address these real-world topics is to abdicate the workplace to all types of spirituality and to abandon Christians in their daily life situations.

### **Future Studies**

Several possibilities for future studies come out of this thesis-project, both using the study curriculum and developing related small-group Bible study topics.

#### **David-Saul Study**

This David-Saul small-group Bible study is certainly usable by others. This curriculum attempts to fill a void of biblical principles for many employees in a stressful employment environment. Improved by the changes and lessons learned above plus adapted to particular contexts and colleagues, this study might easily be done by others. Principles from the David-Saul relationship—a great biblical case study about working for a bad boss—can help workers or help them help their coworkers and colleagues.

#### **Related Workplace Studies**

Many workplace issues, challenges, and problems affect business employees today. Christians need practical biblical principles concerning these job and workplace topics, to assist both themselves and their coworkers. The church and Christian leaders must be intentional to help believers study and apply principles of God's Word to their problems in the workplace. Below are some proposed themes and topics for Bible study discussion that might help employees and employers.

Employee-oriented studies might address these themes. Appendix M shows a detailed outline of people and passages for each topic:

A First or New Job—Called to It

A First or New Job—Starting It

Being Faithful in Secular Settings

Being an Honest Advisor to Your Boss

Temptation and Sin: Facing and Fleeing

Employer-focused studies are also important. However, as mentioned earlier, there are voluminous amounts of literature and Bible studies on leaders. But some thematic studies for leaders might include the following topics (see Appendix N for details):

Taking Care of Your People

Selecting, Training, and Mentoring Employees/Followers

Managing Crises and Handling Chaos

How to Be a Self-Centered Leader

Speaking Truth to Power—Standing Against Injustice and Immorality

### **Study Conclusion**

This entire thesis-project was a great spiritual experience! First, the reading and research expanded the author's understanding of business and workplace relationships, especially those involving a bad boss. Second, the small-group discussions exploring and applying God's Word to workplace issues were personally enjoyable and professionally helpful. Third, this entire thesis-project process made the author much more aware of the complex employee-employer relationships—for himself and for others—and more alert



to biblical principles as a Christian follower-employee-worker and a leader-employer-boss in various workplace situations.

May God's word through Jeremiah to the struggling exiles in their strange Babylonian world four hundred years after David be a similar exhortation and encouragement to each one of us who belong to Jesus Christ in today's world and its workplaces:

Build . . . settle down . . . plant . . . increase in numbers there—do not decrease . . . seek the peace and prosperity of the . . . [workplace] to which I carried you. . . . Pray to the Lord for it, because as it prospers, you too will prosper. . . . Do not let prophets and diviners [of various spiritualities] deceive you. Do not listen to [their] dreams. . . . I know the plans I have for you—plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. . . . Call upon me, and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.<sup>367</sup>

May the God of David hear us and help us in our workplace stresses and struggles, just as he did with David with Saul when he was confused or in cave (from which this prayer comes, in its Hebrew poetic parallelism)—for the Lord is with us too!

I cry aloud to the Lord;  
     I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.  
 I pour out my complaint before him;  
     before him, I tell my trouble.  
 When my spirit grows faint within me,  
     it is you, who know my way—  
     in the path where I walk. . . .  
 Set me free from my prison [situation]  
     that I may praise your name.  
 Then the righteous will gather about me  
     because of your goodness to me.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Jeremiah 29:5-8, 11-13.

<sup>368</sup> Psalm 142:1-3a, 7.

## APPENDIX A

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS PROPOSAL (Summer 2007)**

Third Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia

### ***“Working under A Bad Boss — The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship: How Biblical Principles Can Help Us in Our Workplace Situations”***

**TEACHER-LEADER:** Bill Weimer

**DATES/TIME:** July into September  
Sunday mornings, 9:45-10:45 a.m.

**PURPOSES:**

- (1) To learn about the recently addressed workplace phenomena: “Bad Bosses” — their types, their characteristics, their relational behaviors, etc.
- (2) To understand employee tensions and options in such “bad boss” settings
- (3) To study the David-Saul employee-employer relationship for some biblical and practical principles for our own life work situations with “bad bosses”

**METHODOLOGY:**

- (1) To provide a Participant Study Guide, of weekly texts and thought questions:
  - (a) For individual reading and learning (during the week)
  - (b) For group discussion and interaction (Sunday mornings)
- (2) To assist participants examine biblical principles and patterns for use and application in our own lives and workplace relationships
- (3) To share with and pray for each other in our own workplace situations dealing (themselves or to help friends) with the “bad boss” problem

**“Working under A Bad Boss —  
The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship:  
How Biblical Patterns and Principles  
Can Help Us in Our Workplace Situations”**

**OVERVIEW:**

This study curriculum sequence and topics covers the David-Saul pattern (1 Samuel 8 into 2 Samuel 2) and some biblical principles for Christian employees working under a bad boss.

A boss-worker development relationship occurs between David and Saul, and usually in our developing relationship with our supervisor. These development phases include: start, success, stress, support, selection, and succession.

**DATE: SESSION TOPIC:**

**SCRIPTURE TEXTS:**

<b>Jul 1</b>	Introduction and Methodology of David-Saul Study	
<b>Jul 8</b>	Start: Organization and Boss—History and Background	1 Sam 8:1-12:25
<b>Jul 15</b>	Success: Boss’ Early Success & Failures—Then Rebuke	1 Sam 13:1-15:35
<b>Jul 22</b>	Success: Employee Identified, Hired & Successful	1 Sam 16:1-17:58
<b>Jul 29</b>	Stress: Relations with Boss Stressful—Support Needed	1 Sam 18:1-19:24
<b>Aug 5</b>	Support: Peer Friendship, Yet More Conflict with Boss	1 Sam 20:1-23:29
<b>Aug 12</b>	Selection: Ruin Opportunities—Role Reversal Lesson	1Sam 24:1-27:12
<b>Aug 19</b>	Selection: Boss’ Bizarre Behavior & Employee’s Behavior	1 Sam 28:1-30:31
<b>Aug 26</b>	Successor: Boss Falls; Employee Reacts & Becomes Boss	1 Sam 31:1-2 Sam 2:7
<b>Sep 2</b>	Review: Your Boss, You, and You as Boss	(David-Saul texts)
<b>Sep 9</b>	Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss	(various texts)

## APPENDIX B

**WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS:**

**Exploring Biblical Principles  
and  
Practical Applications  
from  
The David-Saul Employee-Employer  
Relationship**

***Participant's Study Guide***

**By  
R. O. "Bill" Weimer**

**July 2007**

For a Small-Group Study  
Third Presbyterian Church, Norfolk, Virginia

July—September 2007

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July 2007

Norfolk, Virginia

## WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS: Exploring Biblical Principles and Practical Applications from The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship

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### **1 INTRODUCTION—What is your attitude toward and approach to your boss?**

“The tyrant boss thinks he is your parent — not your father or mother, with all the love and concern those roles entail, but your parent — authority incarnate, plain and simple, absolute, and not to be questioned. His object is to make you feel like a child in the narrowest and most negative sense: a little person wholly dependent on the parent, incapable of making decisions. The tyrant relies on monologue and avoids dialogue, though he may ask lots of questions. The tyrant is interested in keeping you unstable and unconfident, so that you never quite feel that you are doing an adequate job.

The tyrannical boss likes a big desk, and his chair is always higher than yours. If the boss is a particularly adept tyrant, he will not look you in the eye but in the forehead, as if to press you down with his gaze.

The tyrant boss is not subtle. He thrives on threats. That does not mean that he warns you daily about your performance or that he practices origami with a pink slip while he’s talking to you. He does, however, use phrases like ‘you’d better,’ ‘get a handle on,’ ‘get on top of,’ ‘get on the ball,’ and ‘get on the stick.’ Clichés are, in fact, very important to the tyrant. In talking to one, you often get the feeling that he is acting out a script.

Well, he is. The tyrant has an image of himself, a crude schematic diagram of what a Boss should be, and he acts according to it. He does not see you, and, really, he does not see or hear himself. He is playing role, and, what is more, he expects you to respond by playing your role. His role is the boss, the man in charge; your role is the worker, the drone, the dependent, the victim.”

Mark Ruskin, *Speaking Up: What to Say to Your Boss and Everyone Else Who Gets on Your Case* (Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, Inc., 1993), 21

“You workers, cooperate with those over you with humility and respect and with the same kind of loyalty you give to Christ — not for praise or promotion, but as Christ’s workers, doing the will of God from the heart and carrying out your work with a good attitude as though the Lord, and not man, was your employer. Realize that whether you are a worker or an employer, whatever good thing you do will be noticed by the Lord.”

Ephesians 6:5-8, Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version of Paul’s Epistles* (New York: A Koinonia Publication, Association Press, 1968), 113

## **PURPOSE — A Biblical and Practical Study**

Have you ever worked for a very difficult leader or for a screaming supervisor? Or, was the individual quiet or a micro-manager? Did this person have serious mood swings or emotional ups-and-downs? Some bosses can be inconsistent, others can be insensitive, and still others can be insecure. We all have weaknesses. But sometimes leaders with serious flaws are in positions of power and authority — they can be our “bad bosses”!

What attitudes and actions do we have — or should we have — if we are working for a very difficult supervisor or, in reality, just a bad boss? Would you most likely or most often [check your answer or answers]...

- ☐ be quiet, do what your boss tells you, and stick it out?
- ☐ avoid interacting with your boss as much as you can?
- ☐ be frustrated mentally and emotionally about your bad job situation?
- ☐ challenge and confront your boss about his treating you poorly?
- ☐ seek support from coworkers and analyze your boss with many of them?
- ☐ quit your job and leave this boss?
- ☐ consider any spiritual principles and perspectives about such a situation?

### **The purpose of this eleven-week study is:**

- (1) To examine biblical perspectives and principles observed in the volatile interactions and relationship between Saul and David, and
- (2) To explore and make applications from Scriptures for our workplace relationships and situations with our supervisors and bosses.

**NOTE:** If you now have a great boss, praise and thank God! Do not overanalyze or project into your current relationship, if it is good — thereby making it bad. Yet do this study (a) reflecting on any bad boss you may have had in the past, (b) realizing you might get one in the future, and (c) relating this study to a friend or coworker whom you can support in a “bad boss” workplace situation.

## **METHODOLOGY — Individual and Group Learning**

**Each week** topics, Scripture passages, and applications are studied in two ways:

- (1) **Five Individual Studies** (5 days about 15-20 min.) — Reading, reflecting, and making notes and applications (marked by ➤) in this Study Guide from the 15-25 verses.
  - (a) First, read that day’s questions and then read the Scripture passage.
  - (b) Second, reread each question and make brief notes in this study guide.
  - (c) Third, pray about applications for your life and workplace situation.
- (2) **One Group Discussion** — Discussing, in a small group or class setting, the biblical principles and applications discovered in the weekly individual study sections for our workplaces; and then praying together — with and for each other — that God’s Word would be active in our lives and workplace relationships, especially with bad bosses.

## **OVERVIEW**

### Weekly Themes and Employee-Boss Developmental Relationship with Scripture Texts

- |           |  |                        |
|-----------|--|------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Introduction — Pre-Study Evals &amp; Study Methodology</b>      | Participant's Guide    |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Start: Organization &amp; Boss — History &amp; Background</b>   | 1 Sam 8:1-12:25        |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Success: Boss' Early Success &amp; Failures, Then Rebuke</b>    | 1 Sam 13:1-15:35       |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Success: Employee Identified, Hired &amp; Succeeds</b>          | 1 Sam 16:1-17:58       |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Stress: Relations with Boss Stressful — Support Needed</b>      | 1 Sam 18:1-19:24       |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Support: Peer Friendship, Yet More Conflict with Boss</b>       | 1 Sam 20:1-23:29       |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Selection: Ruin Opportunities — Role Reversal Lesson</b>        | 1 Sam 24:1-27:12       |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Selection: Boss' Bizarre Behavior &amp; Employee's Behavior</b> | 1 Sam 28:1-30:31       |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Successor: Boss Fails; Employee Reacts &amp; Becomes Boss</b>   | 1 Sam 31:1-2 Sam 2:7   |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Review: Your Boss, You &amp; You as Boss</b>                    | study review & summary |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss</b>          | various texts & topics |



## **2 START: ORGANIZATION & BOSS — HISTORY & BACKGROUND**

### **2 — Day 1**

They tried several locations: an ice cream stand in 1978, another state, a gas station, an abandoned textile mill, and even a truck repair shop vacant space. Then their efforts began to succeed. This emerging company got great publicity and also public support when it was challenged legally by a corporate giant — and its symbol, the Pillsbury Doughboy. Ten years after starting their organization, these two business entrepreneurs and folk heroes were honored by President Ronald Reagan with a special achievement award. Their unconventional, engagingly silly, almost anti-establishment, and outrageous marketing style was demonstrated when they sought a CEO. Their selection process: hold a “Yo! I Want to Be a CEO Because . . . in 100 Words or Less” contest!

Adapted from John Gove, *Made in America: The True Stories Behind the Brand Names That Built a Nation* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), 14-13

### **Organization’s History and Development** (1 Sam 8:1-22)

(1) Ben and Jerry emerged from two ice cream guys into corporate giants. How and why did the Israelites grow to the point of seeking a king to be their political-spiritual leader?

(2) Having a king would bring what changes and challenges for Israel as a people and as an organization?

- (3) What is the history and development of your company and your division or section? — List briefly key dates, events, developments, and leaders.
- (4) In the past 2-3 years, have there been changes and challenges for your company? If so, what, why, and how did they affect your organization?

**PRAYER:** Thank God for placing you in your job. Ask Him to help you to learn more about your company and your boss. Pray that you would better see and understand how God is “king” and sovereign (i.e., the Lord) over your life and your workplace situation.

## 2 — Day 2

He earned bachelor and master degrees, coached swimming, and then joined the Navy in 1966. He became the first Vietnam War “Ace” by shooting down five enemy planes. Nominated for the Medal of Honor, he received the Navy Cross, two Silver Stars, fifteen Air Medals, the Purple Heart, and other decorations. Resembling John Wayne, he was nicknamed “Duke.” In 1972, he became an instructor at the Navy’s “Top Gun” School for fighter pilots at Naval Air Station Miramar in San Diego; some say his experiences were depicted in the popular 1986 movie, *Top Gun*.

He earned an MBA from National University, a San Diego night school, and retired from the Navy in 1987. After some time in business, he became well known on CNN-TV as an expert military commentator just prior to the Gulf War.

Republican leaders recognized his TV popularity and convinced him to run for a San Diego Congressional District against eight-year holder Democrat Jim Bates, who was in a sexual harassment scandal. He won his party’s nomination in 1990 and defeated Bates — promising to be “a congressman we can be proud of” — thus started an eight-term tenure for this military hero and expert, Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham.

Adapted from Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham,  
<http://www.cunninghamforcongress.com/biography.htm>

### **Boss’ History and Background** (1 Sam 9:1-13)

(1) Before he was elected to Congress, Randy “Duke” Cunningham was a famous American fighter pilot hero from the Vietnam War and military consultant. Describe Saul before he was selected to be king?

(2) Analyze Saul’s leadership here — following instructions, initiative, relations with his servant, seeking or openness to God’s leading, etc.

➤ (3) How did your boss or direct supervisor arrive at his/her leadership position?

➤ (4) What were some of his/her qualifications, skills, and successes?

**PRAYER:** Thank God for your boss’ specific skills and abilities. Ask Him to bless you, your company, and your boss — and to understand His placing you in your job.

## 2 — Day 3

Most interviews by this man had a standard theme: Put the interviewee in a stressful situation, conceptual or actual, and then observe the reaction. This interviewer looked for quick responses, and would even tolerate some antagonism to his questions. His methods are legendary. Sometimes front legs of a chair were cut shorter than the rear legs, to see how the seated interviewee would react as he tended to slide forward during the interview. A related method was to weaken the chair legs so they would collapse, to observe what the interviewee would do. One set-up was to require that candidates tie their shoes in front of him, believing that he could assess their potential by watching their technique. In another scenario, the candidate was told to imagine that he was on a sinking boat with five other people. *“The conditions are that one, and only one of you, can be saved,”* the interviewee stated. *“Are you resourceful enough to talk the other five into letting you be the one?”* When the candidate said he was, the interviewer called five members of his staff into the room and said to the candidate, *“Start talking!”*

These are examples of interviewing and identifying potential officers for the Navy’s emerging nuclear power program, done by Admiral Hyman Rickover — often referred to as “the father of the nuclear navy.”

### **Boss Identified, Interviewed, and Hired** (1 Sam 9:14-10:8)

(1) Admiral Rickover was famous — rather infamous — for his bizarre interview techniques with Naval Officers whom he would select for his nuclear power program. How did Samuel identify Saul as the future leader of Israel? Why did he invite Saul to eat with him?

(2) What was your boss doing before his/her current leadership role? What strengths and achievements had he/she shown before this job?

(3) How was your boss hired or promoted? — What was the process?

➤ (4) Why and how were you hired or promoted into your current work position?

**PRAYER:** Ask God for understanding about your boss’ background and the method by which he or she came into the leadership position over you. Also, pray for insights and appreciation about why he/she was hired or placed in that role.

## 2 — Day 4

“Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you: you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising, which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to the end requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

### **Boss Installed — Some Critics** (1 Sam 10:9-11:15)

(1) As the quotation from Emerson states, there are usually critics and second-guessers after difficult decision situations. Yet leaders and bosses must be courageous and calm. After Saul was introduced and installed as king, how did he respond . . .

(a) To his first challenge? Why were some people cynical? — Any legitimate reasons?

(b) To his second challenge? Summarize Saul’s leadership style at this time?

(c) To those who had criticized him? What could he have done to them?

➤ (2) When your boss assumed a leadership role, were there any persons or groups...

(a) Who disagreed or grumbled about his/her assuming that role? If so, why?

(b) Who — because of questioning or criticizing the boss — was transferred, fired, demoted, or maybe even experienced no reaction? Explain.

➤ (3) Does your boss seek or encourage different ideas, opinions, and suggestions?

➤ (4) How does your boss usually respond to critics or criticism?

PRAYER: Lord, help me understand my boss better — strengths, weaknesses, operating style, interpersonal relationships, etc. — as I do my job as well as I can.

## 2 — Day 5

“You now face a new world, a world of change . . . through all this welter of change and development, your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war.

The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. . . . In my dreams, I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory, I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: duty, honor, country.

Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the corps, and the corps, and the corps.

I bid you, farewell.”

General Douglas MacArthur’s Farewell Address to the  
Corps of Cadets at West Point, May 12, 1962

### **Former Boss Retires — Reflects on the Organization** (1 Sam 12:1-25)

(1) General MacArthur’s 1962 address at West Point is one of the great goodbye speeches ever. In Samuel’s farewell speech, what does this “retiring leader” say about . . .

(a) “The organization” — that is, Israel — and about his leadership for the Israelites?

(b) About God’s leadership over Israel, when they forgot God or followed God?

➤ (2) Within your company, have you seen God’s blessing? How?/In what ways?

➤ (3) Have any leaders recently retired or left from your organization or company? — How did they contribute to its growth and/or success? Did they offer any reflections and comments about the company — past, present, and future? If so, what?

PRAYER: Thank God for recent leaders of your organization and how their influence, vision, contributions, etc. are a positive influence. Ask for a humble and eager spirit to learn from past supervisors, etc. who were significant in your company’s development.

## **2 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) What was the development of the

(a) Nation of Israel?

(b) Position of king?

(2) What has been the development of

(a) Your organization or company?

(b) Your boss or supervisor —

(i) Background, interview, and selection?

(ii) Being hired and installed?

(3) Have you learned some new insights about your boss . . .

(a) Starting the job?

(b) Strengths for and in the job?

(c) Some/any critics or criticism as your boss started leadership?

(4) When your boss started . . .

(a) Was there any official transformation of responsibilities? How did that go?

(b) Did the out-going or any other older leaders offer any words of advice, officially or unofficially about the organization and its future? If so, what?

### **3 SUCCESS: BOSS' EARLY SUCCESS & FAILURES, THEN REBUKE**

#### **3 — Day 1**

“I had watched his widely celebrated “turnaround” of the stodgy paper producer [Kimberly-Clark Corp.] from the sidelines, growing increasingly skeptical as Dunlap became ever more boastful. My subsequent cover story [for Business Week], “The Shredder”... reported that Dunlap was an opportunist who simply prettied up the company for a quick sale. He cut muscle along with the fat, sacrificed the long-term future of a once-great company and its people for a quick buck, and took credit for the achievements and hard work of others. Though he claimed a turn-around and too many journalists believed him, Scott [bought by Kimberly-Clark] had lost market share in all three of its major product areas during Dunlap’s tenure. He and his executives reaped tens of millions in gains while thousands of employees lost their jobs and their livelihoods.”

John A. Byrne, *Chainsaw: The Notorious Career of Al Dunlap in the Era of Profit-at-Any-Price* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1999, 1993), 4

#### **Boss' Early Success, Then Failure** (1 Sam 13:1-15)

(1) Al Dunlap, known as “Chainsaw Al” by many during the 1990s, slashed costs and cut personnel to show immediate profits — but shortly thereafter, his companies usually declined. How does Saul begin to lead and unite the Israelites? What are his strengths?

(2) What is an early weakness Saul shows as a leader and boss? What dilemma faced Saul, and which course of action did he choose? Who criticized him and why?

➤ (3) When your boss assumed his/her position, what actions did he/she take?

➤ (4) At this beginning, what leadership style was shown? What strengths and skills? Were any weaknesses observed? — If so, what?

PRAYER: O God, show me how to work under and be honest with a boss who may only focus on “bottom-lines” in the workplace. Lord, while I seek to do a good job and help my company succeed, enable me to be approachable and teachable, to be concerned for people as well as profits, and to reflect Your favor and blessing with others.

### 3 — Day 2

“Management expert Leonard Schlesinger advises: Stop whining about your boss, start thinking of your boss, get courageous when your boss is not, and know that ‘*it doesn’t take a wizard to build a better boss.*’”

Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss so You Both Win* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 293

#### **Leadership Resources and Tactics** (1 Sam 13:16-14:23)

(1) Whatever the challenges, you usually need take action as Useem states above, or as the Marines say, “*Lead, follow, or get out of the way!*” What resources do the Israelites have, or not have, against the Philistines? With those material limitations, what warfare tactics did they use against their adversary?

➤ (2) What strategic planning (e.g., vision, goals, objectives) did your boss initiate upon assuming his/her current leadership position? — With what results?

➤ (3) What tactical operations (e.g., daily procedures, production processes, customer services, etc.) changes/emphases were enacted? — With what results?

(4) Who is a key leader for King Saul against the Philistines? What affect does Jonathan’s leadership have for Israel? Did Saul even realize it was Jonathan, his son, who was being so successful? — What might this say about Saul as a senior leader?

➤ (5) Does your boss seem to know and keep-up with employees and workers, both professionally and personally? All equally? — If not, apparently why not?

PRAYER: Pray that God would help you appreciate and encourage your coworkers. Ask the Lord to show you how you might help your boss appreciate more workers — or at least, how you can build and increase organizational morale and esprit de corps.



### 3 — Day 3

“Sustained great results depend upon building a culture full of self-disciplined people who take disciplined action. . . . Bureaucratic cultures arise to compensate for incompetence and lack of discipline, which arise from having the wrong people on the bus in the first place. If you get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off, you don’t need stultifying bureaucracy.

Do not confuse a culture disciple with a tyrant who disciplines — they are very different concepts: one highly functional, the other highly dysfunctional. Savior CEOs who personally discipline through sheer force of personality usually fail to produce sustained results.”

Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 142

#### **Boss’ Poor Leadership under Stress — and the Consequences** (1 Sam 14:24-52)

(1) Organizational policies and principles, even rules and regulations, can be helps or hindrances — as Collins notes above — based on how leaders apply them to or for employees, either forcefully or flexibly. What order does Saul give under combat stress, focusing fully on mission-accomplishment?

(a) Who does not “get this order” and what does this soldier do?

(b) After a victory, what did the soldiers do? — Why?! How does Saul react?

➤ (2) Normally and especially under challenges, pressure, changes, and stress,  
(a) What is your boss’ leadership style with employees?

(b) How do you react, to such situations and to your boss?

PRAYER: Pray that God would give you insight, flexibility, and loyalty with the policies and guidelines of your boss and company — even and especially when some of those principles or patterns may not seem reasonable or not be ones which you would issue or require. Seek patience and a spirit of support when your boss is leading, directing, ordering, etc. under stress and pressure.

### 3 — Day 4

”Good managers must allow people to act on their behalf and live with the consequences. In return, employees must adopt the established agenda and make it of paramount personal and professional importance. If those two parts of the equation aren’t present, the relationship may not explode outright, but it’s not likely to be as strong, productive, and satisfying as it could be, should be, and — as far as I’m concerned — must be.

But what I won’t do is hide a mistake. I believe in full disclosure and that’s one of my reciprocal trust-building techniques. . . . To gain trust you have to give trust. . . . Of all the business relationships that exist, the ones between employees and their bosses are the only ones that are so dependent on trust that the smallest flaw or deficiency can potentially be catastrophically disruptive.”

Executive Assistant for fourteen years to Jack Welch.  
Rosanne Badowski with Roger Gittines, *Managing Up: How to Forge an Effective Relationship with Those Above You* (New York: A Currency Book, 2003), 26

#### **Leader’s New Task — and Completion Issue** (1 Sam 15:1-15)

(1) No doubt Jack Welch’s Executive Assistant had some challenging situations and made mistakes at times. What new task is Saul given? How did he execute this job?

(2) How is the intention-expression and task-execution polarity a conflict for Saul, and what was his decision? Why? — What were motives and influences causing him to act as he did? How does he explain himself, for not carrying out his assignment completely?

- (3) Do you see your boss caught in some dilemmas and conflicts over executing organizational orders and assignments? — What, when, where, why, how?
- (4) Do you ever have such challenges in your job? In such difficult dilemmas and moral conflicts, what are key foundational principles that guide your thinking and decision-making?

PRAYER: Seek the Spirit’s reminders about the Word’s relational, ethical, and spiritual principles in your workplace. Ask the Lord to help you be a person of moral integrity and honesty — with your supervisor, in your assignments, and for your company.

### 3 — Day 5

“Faith Abell said she was impressed with Randy ‘Duke’ Cunningham's integrity and sincerity years ago when he was running for Congress and interviewed on a Christian radio station. Yesterday, when the war hero pleaded guilty to felony bribery charges and resigned his seat representing the 50th Congressional District, her faith was broken. *‘This is really a shock. I thought he was so trustworthy,’* said Abell, co-owner of City Printing in Clairemont Mesa. *‘I’m deeply hurt, disappointed and mad. I guess it shows because someone is supported by a Christian, it doesn’t mean they’re trustworthy.’”*

“Many Voters Shocked, Dismayed,” Dani Dodge,  
*San Diego Union-Tribune*, November 29, 2005.  
<http://www.sandiegotribune.com/news/politics/Cunningham/20051128-999-1n29react.html>

#### **Leader’s Disobedience and Dishonor — Then Rejection** (1 Sam 15:16-35)

(1) Randy "Duke" Cunningham was a Vietnam War hero, a military expert, and a Congressman (see 2 — Day 2). Yet he took millions of dollars in bribes and shamefully resigned from Congress — tried and convicted, he went to jail. After Samuel’s rebuke, how did Saul respond? What explanation does he give? Is he repentant and teachable?

(2) Why did Saul plead with Samuel to go back with him to the people of Israel?

➤ (3) When you make mistakes by your actions or errors in your judgment, are you prone to make excuses or are you open, repentant, and teachable?

(4) How would you assess Saul’s leadership at this point? Summarize his strengths and weaknesses? What seem to be his motivations and characteristics as king and leader?

➤ (5) When you came to your job, what was your boss' reputation, past challenges and successes, strengths and weaknesses, style of leading, and method of operation?

PRAYER: Lord God, I make mistakes. Grant me Your grace and forgiveness — and then strength — when I fail. Also, grant me grace and mercy with others when they fail, and show me in my workplace how to lead others in and through such situations.

### **3 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) As your boss or immediate superior started in his or her job as leader (before you arrived in your position)...

(a) What were your boss' early leadership challenges or problems, if any?

(b) What were some successes and/or struggles and failures?

(2) Have you seen your boss under pressure or having tension at work? — If so . . .

(a) What good leadership was demonstrated and with what outcomes?

(b) What poor leadership was shown and with what results for both the company and for the employees?

(3) In what specific ways can you . . .

(a) Encourage, affirm, and support your boss's positive leadership?

(b) Balance, maybe counter-balance, or even — if necessary — confront your boss' negative leadership?

(4) Do you think your boss ever feels disapproval or rejections from his or her boss or supervisor? If so . . .

(a) What have been some of those situations (the best you know)?

(b) How might you "support or help" your boss at such times?

## **4 SUCCESS: EMPLOYEE IDENTIFIED, HIRED & SUCCEEDS**

### **4 — Day 1**

“I had applied for the nuclear submarine program, and Admiral Rickover was interviewing me...we sat in a large room by ourselves for more than two hours, and he let me choose any subjects I wished to discuss. Very carefully, I chose those about which I knew most at the time — current events, seamanship, music, literature, naval tactics, electronics, gunnery — he began to ask me a series of questions of increasing difficulty. In each instance, he soon proved I knew relatively little about the subject I had chosen. He always looked right into my eyes, and he never smiled. I was saturated with cold sweat.

Finally, he asked a question and I thought I could redeem myself. He said, *‘How did you stand in your class at the Naval Academy?’* Since I had completed my sophomore year at Georgia Tech before entering Annapolis, I had done very well. I swelled my chest with pride and answered, *‘Sir, I stood fifty-ninth in a class of 820!’* I sat back to wait for the congratulations — which never came. Instead, the question: *‘Did you do your best?’*

I started to say, *‘Yes, sir,’* but I remembered who this was and recalled many times at the Academy when I could have learned more about our allies, our enemies, weapons, strategy, and so forth. I finally gulped and said, *‘No, sir, I didn’t always do my best.’* He looked at me for a long time, and then turned his chair around to end the interview. He asked one final question, which I have never been able to forget — or to answer. He said, *‘Why not?’* I sat there for a while, shaken, and then slowly left the room.”

President Jimmy Carter recalling his interview by Admiral Rickover, “father of the nuclear navy.”

### **New Employee Identified/Selected by (and to Work for) the Lord** (1 Sam 16:1-13)

(1) Admiral Rickover wanted insight into his officers’ character, as then LT Jimmy Carter revealed. What were Samuel’s criteria at Jessie’s house for Israel’s second king?

(2) How was David identified? What was he doing, and how would this help him?

➤ (3) How were you identified for your job, and what experiences were factors?

➤ (4) Have you had life or learning experiences — not utilized in your coming to your present job — which may give you insights, skills, etc. to help you? What?

PRAYER: In all I do O Lord, may my hands, my head, and my heart belong to You.

## 4 — Day 2

“I was executive vice president of the discounter’s trade association, working in my New York office one day in 1967. My secretary said there was a man out front who wanted to join our group. I said I would give him ten minutes. So in comes this short, wiry man with a deep tan and a tennis racket under his arm...I didn’t know what to think. When he meets you, he looks at you — head cocked to one side, forehead slightly creased — and he proceeds to extract every piece of information in your possession. He always makes little notes. And he pushes on and on. After two and a half hours, he left, and I was totally drained. I wasn’t sure what I had just met, but I was sure we would hear more from him.”

Retailing Consultant Kurt Barnard recalls his encounter with a young man seeking to learn, Mr. Sam Walton. Sam Walton with John Hay, *Sam Walton: Made in America — My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 105

### **New Employee Identified/Selected By (and to Work For) the Leader** (1 Sam 16:14-23)

(1) Sam Walton, who would become the largest retailer in the world, was eager to learn and serve as a young businessman. In the Biblical text, what struggle did King Saul face?

(2) To what extent did he understand — or not understand — his situation and a solution? How did David serve and help Saul?

➤ (3) Are there challenges or struggles that your boss is now facing? What are these, and why you think they have developed?

➤ (4) How can you assist, support, and minister to your boss in these difficulties — either professionally and/or personally? Will you do this? When, where, and how?

PRAYER: Ask for God’s insight and compassion for your boss in any areas of struggle, difficulty, etc. Pray the Spirit will show and help you to minister in these situations when He opens and allows the opportunity — in the meantime, continue to lift up your boss in prayer. Lord, grant me a spirit of listening and learning, that I might be a better servant and leader.

### 4 — Day 3

“Appalled by [General] McClellan’s reserve, Lincoln visited his field headquarters on October 1 [1862] and warned against such overcautiousness. The following day, the president stood with a friend overlooking the Union’s still inert army [of 90-100,000] and asked if the friend knew what lay before them. The friend replied that it was obviously the Army of Potomac. ‘*So it is called, but that is a mistake,*’ Lincoln replied. ‘*It is only McClellan’s bodyguard.*’

Several days after departing McClellan’s encampment, the president ordered his general to ‘*cross the Potomac and give battle to the enemy or drive him south.*’ Lincoln told McClellan that he ‘*must move now.*’ For the next thirty days, however, McClellan refused to budge. During this prolonged immobility, Confederate cavalry commander Jeb Stuart and 1,800 troopers once again rode all the way around McClellan’s army. When McClellan tried to explain that this newest disgrace was the result of an exhausted Union cavalry, Lincoln retorted, ‘*Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam [three weeks prior] that fatigue anything?*’”

Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss So You Both Win* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 29-30.

#### **A Serious Boss Leadership Challenge** (1 Sam 17:1-11)

(1) General McClellan seemed paralyzed, even though he had superior numbers, when facing the Confederate armies. Here in the history of Israel, what is the challenge and crisis? How are the people in the organization reacting? How is their leader responding?

(2) Is Goliath the only “big” problem here? What else may be an issue?

➤ (3) At this time, are there any serious challenges confronting your organization, your department, or your work group — and even your boss! — which may be frustrating, aggravating, or paralyzing people and even leaders like your boss? What are these problems, and how are they affecting people in the organization?

➤ (4) Can you do anything about these critical issues and problems? What and how?

PRAYER: Seek God’s “eyes and ears (and heart)” on problems which your organization, boss, and/or coworkers may be facing? Ask the Lord to give you — in the perception and trust of others — approachability and ability to help them with such challenges.

#### 4 — Day 4

“Marine Corps Lieutenant Peter Pace arrived in Hue to take command. . . . Pace and his platoon were soon patrolling . . . as an advance party for a company of 160 men on patrol when Pace came to a fork in the road in an area crawling with enemy forces. He radioed his company commander for advice, ‘*Do you want me to go left or do you want me to go right?*’ Captain Meadows barked back, ‘*Go left.*’ When Pace faced a second split, he asked for advice. The third call for the same purpose brought him a tongue-lashing from his commander: He was a lieutenant, the guy in front, and he was there to take action.

Pace learned on the spot that when they were his problems to solve, he would make his own decisions and not run them up the chain of command. . . . He also resolved to err on the side of confidence over diffidence, of solving more and asking less. . . . ‘*I promised myself that I would get in trouble for going too far, not for holding back.*’ Pace thought to himself: Okay, you want me to lead, I’m leading. If you don’t want me to lead, you’ll have to walk the length of the column to come here and find me to stop me.”

General Peter Pace currently serves as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss So You Both Win* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 155.

#### **New Employee Steps Forward as a Leader** (1 Sam 17:12-37)

(1) Lt. Peter Pace led from the front and stepped up to challenges. How does David...

(a) Become knowledgeable, involved, and motivated about Israel’s situation?

(b) Select his resources, and reject others, to fight Goliath?

➤ (2) For the organizational, company, and/or departmental challenges . . .

(a) Even if you don’t have all knowledge or ability for every situation, what three or four skills, experiences, ideas, etc. can you contribute toward a solution(s)?

(b) How will you offer your contribution and assistance to help your boss — for his/her challenges or for those of the organizations through this boss?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, You took initiative and bore my burdens and sins. Enable me to hear and help others, to step-up and assist colleagues or a supervisor in their struggles.



## 4 — Day 5

“Sunbeam’s previous boss, Roger Schipke was a quiet, unassuming man with refined and subtle tastes. He was an executive of integrity and honor, his business judgment informed by his decades at General Electric, Co., the academy of Corporate America. He was soft-spoken, well-reasoned, extraordinarily good-hearted, and eminently likable because he seemed so pleasant and agreeable. . . .

[the] new boss, on the other hand, sat at the table like an imperial demagogue. He cheered his own accomplishments reminding the men that he had done eight turnarounds on three continents and Sunbeam would be his ninth. He even urged them to buy his forth-coming book, *Mean Business: How I Save Bad Companies and Make Good Companies Great*, so they would know exactly what he expected from them.”

John A. Byrne, *Chainsaw: The Notorious Career of Al Dunlap in the Era of Profit-at-Any-Price* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1999, 1993), 4.

### **Different Bosses and Different Resources — Results: Success** (1 Sam 17:38-58)

(1) Sunbeam Corporation had two very different CEOs in Roger Schipke and Al Dunlap. What were Goliath’s resources — and the obstacles facing David? With what resources did David face Goliath? Describe the outcome of their confrontation?

➤ (2) What obstacles and challenges did you listed the past two days (4 Days 3 and 4) for your organization and/or for other people — about which you are praying that you might help? List (again) your resources for each obstacle:

(3) How did Saul react after David had defeated Goliath? Do you think it was odd that the King did not immediately recognize or remember David? — Why?/Why not?

➤ (4) Do you or your coworkers ever perform well jobs or achieve assigned goals, but are not thanked or recognized? When and where? Why do you think this occurs?

PRAYER: Ask God to show you challenges for your company or your boss, enable you to see the facts, and then empower you to assess resources for solutions. Ask Him to grant you faith as you step forward, not as a problem-presenter but as a problem-solver.

#### **4 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) For your workplace job and organizational position,

(a) How were you identified, interviewed, and hired?

(b) How were you installed, placed, or assigned into it?

(2) What were your first weeks or months like on the job? Were you faced with or given any unique task(s) or assigned any difficult project(s)? If so,

(a) What and why was the assignment give to you?

(b) Did your boss give you (i) specific instructions, tools, resources, etc. about how to do your project or assignment, or (ii) only general guidance and goals allowing you to use your own leadership ideas, methods, and resources to accomplish the task? Explain this briefly.

(3) With your early work assignments,

(a) How did you perform? Did you have some success or achieve unique results?

(b) If (or when) you did succeed well, how did your boss respond?

## **5 STRESS: RELATIONS WITH BOSS STRESSFUL — SUPPORT NEEDED**

### **5 — Day 1**

“the ‘biggest dog’ syndrome — they didn’t mind other dogs in the kennel, as long as they remained the biggest one.”

Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t* (New York: Harper-Business, 2001), 26.

### **Leaders’ Stress, Rivalry, and Jealousy — Relationship Changes** (1 Sam 18:1-5)

(1) Why do you think some leaders have to be “the biggest dog”? After defeating Goliath, how does David’s employee-employer relationship with Saul change? — Why?

➤ (2) When you started your job . . .

(a) What past work, achievement(s), etc. led to your hiring or promotion?

(b) How did your relationships start? Did you develop any good friendships with coworkers? — If so, with whom and how did these emerge?

### **Leadership Results — Relationship Changes** (18:6-16)

(1) Why does Saul’s relation with David begin to change? — What were the factors?

(2) What emotional reactions does Saul have here toward David?

➤ (3) Have any frictions developed between you and your boss? If so, what/why?

(a) Any successes or accomplishments you may have had?

(b) Could how you reacted, wanted credit, focused on yourself, etc. — or given that impression — have produced questioning or jealousy by your boss?

➤ (4) Do you believe “the Lord is with you” in your coming to your job? If so, why?

PRAYER: Lord, remind me that I work for my company, not myself — that work success is not just for me, and that I should never try to outshine or overshadow my boss.

## 5 — Day 2

“At some point or another during a career, in addition to having 15 minutes of fame, every employee will have fleeting minutes of favoritism . . . but it does not come without some baggage. The more that your manager pours praise and perks upon you, the more that your friends will bristle. . . . Some employees in your position consciously or unwittingly engage in a form of ‘dumbing down’ so that they will gradually fall out of favor with the manager and then be reaccepted by the group. Unless your peers are more important than your career, that is a step to avoid. . . . A better approach is to continue to be friendly and businesslike, while totally ignoring their petty comments. . . . One important remaining question is why you are the favorite. If it is because of your stellar performance, perhaps the favoritism indicates that you are a rising star in the organization. However, if there is no logical reason for the favoritism, be on guard because it can disappear in 15 minutes.”

Ken Lloyd, *Jerks at Work: How to Deal with People Problems and Problem People* (Franklin Lake, NJ: Caress Press, 1999), 125-26.

### **Boss-Employee Relationship Complexities** (1 Sam 18:17-30)

(1) Favoritism from the boss causes dilemmas. As Saul gives David leadership roles and yet is jealous of his accomplishments, how does he try to solidify their relationship?

(2) How might being married to the king’s daughter enable the Philistines better to “raise their hand” (18:17) against David, instead of Saul doing it?

➤ (3) What favors, special benefits, etc. should an employee accept and receive — versus not receive — from a boss? Why?

➤ (4) Have you ever been offered any “benes” from the boss that made you feel uncomfortable? If so, what, and how did you respond [check one]?

☐ Accept them, because of pressure (offer) from the boss?

☐ Rejected them, because I said it was wrong?

☐ Thanked the boss very much, but suggested an alternative to the offer?

☐ Did not know what to do?

(5) Who was in love with David? What “price” does Saul ask for giving Michal in marriage to David? — What was his reason for this proposal?

PRAYER: O God, give me wisdom and grace when I am rewarded or even favored, about how I should respond both to my boss and to my coworkers.

## 5 — Day 3

“When managers run hot and cold, it is not uncommon to find that their employees are upset with the work atmosphere. Unfortunately, your chances of changing your manager are about the same as your chances of changing the weather.

Because there is no way to make your manager more even-tempered, the only change that can occur in this situation will have to come from you. You need to pay less attention to mood swings, put them in proper perspective, and focus more on the aspects of your job that are sources of satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction.”

Ken Lloyd, *Jerks at Work: How to Deal with People Problems and Problem People* (Franklin Lake, NJ: Caress Press, 1999), 41.

### **Employee’s Support — Work Colleague** (1 Sam 19:1-10)

(1) We all have times when we are “not in the best mood,” but when leaders are “moody” or mercurial in their style and relationships it can be difficult for workers. As David has another success, how does Saul respond? Why?/What may be causes for his reactions?

➤ (2) Do you ever have mood swings or spiritual-emotional downtimes? Do these affect you at work or in your performance? How and when? — Why?

➤ (3) Does your boss sometimes have “ups and downs”? How does he/she act when that happens? How can you and your colleagues respond when this does occur?

(4) How did Jonathan support David? Was his advocacy just because of their friendship, or, were there facts that David was not a threat to Saul? What were Jonathan’s points? As Saul and David re-set their relationship, why did Saul again become hostile?

➤ (5) Can you say — as Jonathan said of David (19:4) — that you have “*not wronged*” your boss in words or action but have worked to “*benefit greatly*” your boss?

PRAYER: O Holy Spirit, You are the Paraclete, “the one along side.” I pray You would  
(a) come alongside me at my job to help me do it well, especially in difficult times, and  
(b) provide for me a colleague who will become a good friend to support each other.

## 5 — Day 4

“In response to critical bully bosses . . . quick and useful second opinions are: a good friend or respected ally at work who could help you determine if any of the criticism is useful; someone you work with whom you can call in a crisis to give you reliable information about the accuracy of the Critic’s comments and suggestions; [and] a close friend, family member, counselor, or therapist who can help you regain your sense of self-confidence and professionalism even when you have just been torn apart. . . .

Asking for support is not a sign of weakness. Don’t buy the garbage about trying to ‘*tough it out*.’ Proponents of that message also say that bullies are needed to make the nation great, to provide a kind of ‘*tough love*’ that weak people resent but actually need in order to become better. That’s absurd! Cruelty has no place in motivation or striving toward excellence. Bullying is only a destructive force and not ‘*good*’ for anyone.”

Gary Namie and Ruth Namie, *The Bully at Work: What You Can Do to Stop the Hurt and Reclaim Your Dignity On the Job* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2000), 22, 222.

### **Employee’s Support — Spouse (or Good Friend)** (1 Sam 19:11-17)

(1) Bullying can occur in all areas of life -- when we face bullies we need colleagues, good friends, and family members to support us! How did Michal support her husband David? Was it right to deceive her father the king plus his men? Why/Why not?

- (2) If you are married, how can your spouse support you concerning your job? How? Equally, if your spouse works, how can you provide support?
- (3) If you are unmarried, do you have a close friend — not at work — who can support you? How and in what ways?

Read Psalm 59 — Note title notes (i.e., when Saul sent men to watch David’s house)

- (4) Have you ever felt at work that the boss or others were trying to harm you in a business or job way or to damage your reputation? How, and why did you think so?
- (5) If you are facing such a situation, can you pray — as David did (Ps 59:2 and 59:11a) — for (a) deliverance from such people and (b) not for destruction of them?

PRAYER: O Lord, thank you for David’s example — a person persecuted unfairly and pursued unjustly by his boss, yet who sought Your deliverance not his boss’ destruction.

## 5 — Day 5

Here are some of Florida State University Football Coach Bobby Bowden's 'Thirty-Five Rules' — "You'll find them peppered with my religious convictions, for which I offer no apology:

Fear no man — Fear only God.

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and He will direct your path' (Prov 3:5-6).

'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, and do not be dismayed. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go' (Josh 1:9).

Why worry... when you can pray?

'I will never leave you or forsake you' (Heb 13:5).

'Be confident in this one thing — that God, who began a good work in you, will complete it' (Phil 1:6).

Good steel must go through the hottest fire."

Bobby Bowden with Steve Bowden, *The Bowden Way: 50 Years of Leadership Wisdom* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 2001), 248-50.

### **Employee's Support — Old Counselor and the Lord** (1 Sam 19:18-24)

- (1) Foundational for Coach Bowden's life and coaching is his looking to the Lord, as well as his wife, coaching staff, and friends. Who are your supporters and confidants at your job or away from work? Are you such a supporter for your coworkers and colleagues? What are ways you can support each other in difficult times?
  
- (2) From whom else did David seek help? Why? What do you think they did together?
  
- (3) Do you have a Christian friend whose maturity, wisdom, and advice you would seek in difficult times — maybe about workplace issues? Who? Will you meet with them to discuss and pray about your job situation if it is so difficult and frustrating?
  
- (4) How did the Lord intervene to help David, to escape Saul and his men?
  
- (5) Do you believe the Lord is with you — even at your job? Why/Why not?
  
- (6) How might God help you in workplace struggles and/or with boss difficulties?

PRAYER: Ask the Holy Spirit to come upon you, upon your boss (and others if they are involved), and upon the situation(s) for resolution — and give you a Christian friend.

## **5 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) As you have performed well or had some workplace success,

(a) Have others at or outside work complimented and praised you? Who and how?

(b) How as your boss reacted and responded,

(i) To others, who have praised you for your achievements?

(ii) To you, in your accomplishments? — Is there any tension about this such as envy, jealousy, or feeling threatened? If so, how are you responding?

(2) Do you have relationship complexities that are hard for you to understand with your boss? If so, explain.

(3) If you have had or now have a bad relationship with your boss, are there other persons with whom you can discuss this situation confidentially for help, insight, and wisdom?

(a) A work colleague? — Who and why this person?

(b) Your spouse if you are married, or a very close friend? — Who why this person?

(c) An older friend, former work colleague (maybe a senior one), or a Christian leader or pastor who might be a counselor and confidant? — Who and why this person?

(4) When and how will you set a time and make an appointment to talk with this above person? Before this meeting, write down some points summarizing what you think has happened to cause your boss-employee relationship to be difficult, strained, or bad.



## **6 SUPPORT: PEER FRIENDSHIP, YET MORE CONFLICT WITH BOSS**

### **6 — Day 1**

“Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labor, would say that he could tell a lot about the companies he visited by talking to people on the plant floor. When they said, ‘we,’ that was a healthy sign, but when they said, ‘they,’ he knew things were not right. . . .

The question to wrestle with is: Do ‘we’ companies produce better quality than ‘they’ companies? Who knows? There aren’t many ‘we’ companies, and the ones who were ‘we’ in the past may now be ‘they.’ The ‘they’ types, from time to time, can become ‘we’ with a change in leadership. In other words, we should think in terms of quality cycles (companies are coping organisms) as we think of life cycles.”

William Lundin and Kathleen Lundin, *When Smart People Work for Dumb Bosses: How to Survive in a Crazy and Dysfunctional Workplace* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 139.

### **A Work Colleague’s Friendship** (1 Sam 20:1-23)

(1) Which attitudes do each of the leaders of Israel (i.e., Saul, David, and Jonathan) have: “we” or “they”? Fearing Saul, does David have someone in whom he can confide and get support? From this colleague friend in a powerful position, what does he seek?

(2) What does Jonathan fear, and how does he seek David’s support?

(3) What sign does Jonathan devise to signal David about his status with Saul?

- (4) Is the prevailing attitude in your company “we” or “they”? Do you have a good friend or coworker who is positive? How can you both improve the “we” approach?
- (5) If you have a bad boss or difficult workplace situation, why is it important to have a colleague with whom you can talk confidentially when you feel mistreated? Would you ever ask this person to “sound out” (20:12) your boss about you? When and why? Could this backfire on you and on your colleague-friend? How and why?

PRAYER: O God, give me a good, wise friend among my coworkers — with whom I can confide, with whom to support each other, and with whom to be positive influences.

## 6 — Day 2

“when employees cover one another’s backsides. And I have to admit, I’ve got a bit of a soft spot on that one. In my experience, that is what good team members do, and on the whole, it facilitates bonding. If it’s one friend covering for another, I fully expect that favor to be returned. That’s part of all of us wanting us [all] to succeed. Such instinctive cooperation and collaboration is why good teams work so well. . . . Except, of course, when people cover for each other in such a way that disguises a weakness that needs to be addressed — lying, for example, or cheating for another.”

Carolyn Kepcher with Stephen Fenichell. *Carolyn 101: Business Lessons from the Apprentice’s Straight Shooter* (New York: A Fireside Book, 2004), 196-97.

### **Coworker’s Advocacy for Employee to Leader** (1 Sam 20:24-43)

(1) Donald Trump’s Executive V.P. on the TV Show *The Apprentice*, Carolyn Kepcher, believes coworkers should cover for each other. How is Jonathan covering for David with the king, his father?! Does the interaction with his father go well or not? Why?

(2) Jonathan says David asked permission to be excused from the New Moon Festival (20:28ff.) — What does this say about David’s job position in relationship to Jonathan?

- (3) Do you have a close coworker confidante/friend, as David did Jonathan, to help you through hard times with your boss? Though you may not want this person to discuss you with the boss — UNLESS you just “come up” in their conversations — how might this person talk with you about your relationship with your boss?
- (4) Do you have a coworker, struggling at work and with a supervisor, for whom you might be both a supporter and an advocate? Who, and how will you do this?
- (5) Have you ever (a) you needed a colleague to stand up for you with the boss, and/or (b) you stood up for a coworker to a boss? How did this work out?

PRAYER: Lord, it is not easy to stand up and speak up for a coworker under a bad boss. If I need such an advocate, please provide one — If a colleague needs this, may I do that.

## 6 — Day 3

“An abusive work culture is like a raging river: You can’t change the way the current flows, but you can learn to ride it and keep from going under. When nature sends you a hurricane, duck for cover, get out of the way, and ride out the storm. If something’s too big for you, you may not be able to fight on your own. In the long run, however, you may be able to create change with some outside and expert help. If you want to get along, go along; but if you can’t go along, get out.”

Gini Graham Scott, *A Survival Guide for Working with Bad Bosses: Dealing with Bullies, Idiots, Back-Stabbers, and Other Managers from Hell* (New York: AMACOM, 2006), 106.

### **Employee Flees the Leader** (1 Sam 21:1-15)

(1) There are several employee response options in a bad boss situation: (a) go along to get along, (b) try to change things, (c) confront the issue(s), or (d) quit the job. Why is David fleeing? — Review 1 Sam 20:22. Does he have his men with him? Do you think this was the right response for David, in response to Saul and his anger? Why/Why not?

- (2) Can you “flee” from your boss, actually or relationally? Why/Why not?
- (3) If you can’t actually flee your supervisor or leave your job, how might you respond to your boss when he/she is angry and unfair?
- (4) Would it be good to relationally “flee” from and avoid your boss? If not, why? Or if so, when and under what circumstances and situations?
- (5) How has Saul’s hostile attitude toward David affected the latter’s behavior? Why does David take Goliath’s sword, when he refused to take/use Saul’s sword (cf. 17:38-9)?

PRAYER: Are you in a situation with a difficult supervisor so stressful that you want to flee? Is it causing your attitudes and actions to become strange and even surprising to you? Ask God to give you relief or a way of escape — if not out of your job, then His presence and peace in it.

## 6 — Day 4

“People tend to forgive ugly moods, agitation, and whining what is the by-product of disease or crises, but they are merciless with those handicapped by negative behaviors that just seem to be part of the person’s personality.... Allowing God to refocus your vision on a person’s strengths and neediness empowers you to hang in there, rather than giving up, when the going is tough.”

Elizabeth B. Brown, *Living Successfully with Screwed-Up People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1999), 230-31.

### **Employee’s Reputation Among Others** (1 Sam 22:1-23)

(1) Is your workplace perspective about others, even a bad boss, like Brown suggests above? When David escapes to the Cave of Adullam, who comes to him? Why?

➤ (2) Is your reputation such that those “*in distress, debt, or discontent*” (22:2) come to you? How do you help them? What do you say/not say about your boss?

(3) Read Psalm 57. Why do you think David wrote it? What was he feeling about Saul?

➤ (4) Have you felt angry or vindictive against your boss? When and why? Have you talked about your boss at such times? If so, with whom? Was this good or not?

(5) Who does Saul round-up, trying to capture David? What accusation does he make, and how does Ahimelech answer Saul, about himself and about David?

➤ (6) If your boss questioned other workers about your attitude and actions toward him/her, what would others say about you to the boss?

(8) What does Saul order his soldiers to do with Ahimelech and his family? How do they respond to the boss’ order? What finally happens, and why?

PRAYER: O Lord, when others seek to harm or criticize me unjustly, be my shield, my defender, my protector, my advocate — and may I defend others in similar situations.

## 6 — Day 5

“If we decided to take concrete steps to change a situation that is making us angry, there are several principles that can help to make us effective in getting what we want. We should avoid acting impulsively. We should make sure that our anger is justified and; be clear on what we want to change. We should prepare in advance what we want to say. . . . We should focus our energy on how to fix things and what we want done in the future rather than complaining about the past and finding fault. . . . It is also helpful to think about the likely consequences of acting on one’s anger. What will it do to the long-term friendship, the person’s motivation, to our own reputation, and to our health?”

Roy H. Lubit, *Coping with Toxic Managers Subordinates... and Other Difficult People* (New York: FT Prentice Hall Financial Times, 2004), 205.

### **Employee’s Performance, Even under Stress** (1 Sam 23:1-29)

(1) Lubit reminds us that bad situations cause us to be stressful and to be angry. What happens again and again in this chapter? Why did not David stand and face Saul with all the king’s accusations and anger? How do you think David felt and thought about Saul?

(2) As David avoids and flees Saul, what did he still do as an Israelite leader? What does he do spiritually? What religious article or item does David utilize?

➤ (3) Are you seeking God’s guidance and help in your work stress? If so, how? If not, how can you do this? What “religious article” do you have as a resource? — In what ways can it be helpful to you in your job and workplace relationships?

(4) Read Psalm 54. From what source does David seek strength and safety?

➤ (5) Do you ever wish payback or revenge on your boss (or anyone) when you feel you have been wronged? At such times, do you have someone with whom you talk and who can give wise counsel, to “*help you find strength in God*” (23:16)? Who?

PRAYER: If now you are persecuted or mistreated, or whenever you might be, pray: “O God, save me; vindicate me by your might. O God, hear my prayer; listen to my words. Surely, You are my helper; You, O God, are the One Who sustains me.” (Ps 54:1-2, 4)

## 6 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications

(1) When there are difficult workplace relations with your boss...

(a) Do you have someone who has been or who can be an advocate for you with your boss when things do not go well? Who is this person and how might this be done?

(b) Are you an advocate for someone, or have you ever had this role — or might you now need to do this — in a difficult work situation?

(2) If you find yourself in a bad boss, stressful situation at work, what are your possible courses of actions which you might take — and what may be occur?

(a) Possible Options:

(b) Possible Consequences (for each option):

#1

#2

#3

#4

(3) If you cannot quit your job, how might you “flee” your boss? What may be the consequences of that action by you? — positive and/or negative?

(4) In a bad boss situation, do you think you could simultaneously both (a) consider changing jobs and yet (b) concentrate on doing your current job the best you can now? Explain your thoughts and reasoning.

## **7 SELECTION: RUIN OPPORTUNITIES — ROLE REVERSAL LESSON**

### **7 — Day 1**

“Don’t expect difficult people to change. They won’t — and in a way that’s good. Because their behavior is often predictable, this enables you to plan ahead, plotting the tactics you’ll use the next time. Troublemakers may not change, by choosing a better approach, you can change the outcome. Learn to respond as well as to listen. Come forward and state that you feel annoyed, upset, enraged. No one can read your mind. Sometimes the offence was totally unintentional and can be easily resolved if allowed to surface. Ask questions instead of making accusations. If you let others save face, you give them room to change their minds.”

Muriel Solomon, *Working with Difficult People*,  
Rev. and expanded ed. (Paramus, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2002),  
307.

#### **Employee Has Opportunity to Harm Leader** (1 Sam 24:1-22)

(1) Muriel Solomon offers some practical suggestions when we have to confront a bad boss. David has been fleeing as Saul pursued him — but in what circumstances do Saul and David “meet”? Could David have harmed or killed Saul? What did he do?

(2) What does David confess to Saul, and how does he explain his actions to the king?

(3) In speaking to the king, (a) what question does David raise, and (b) what statement does David make to and about his boss? — Why? How does Saul respond?

➤ (4) Have you ever had occasions to “harm” or “subvert” your boss? If so, when, where and how? — What did you do in that situation(s)?

➤ (5) What is your attitude toward your boss? Why?/Based upon what perspectives?

PRAYER: Seek God’s help to understand your boss or supervisor “*as the Lord’s anointed.*” Wrestle with the Lord in prayer about why this is hard for you, and think about His sovereignty in placing you in your job and under the one who is your boss.

## 7 — Day 2

“By taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy. But in passing it over, he is superior.”

Francis Bacon quoted by Roy H. Lubit, *Coping with Toxic Managers, Subordinates . . . and Other Difficult People* (New York: FT Prentice Hall Financial Times, 2004), 205.

### **Employee Seeks Revenge and Payback** (1 Sam 25:1-22)

(1) Essayist Francis Bacon insightfully says that in being revengeful, we just replicate the behavior of our enemy or adversary. With what couple does David interact here? What was the occasion, and what did David seek? Why?/What were his reasons?

➤ (2) Have you ever sought a favor from someone you had helped, only to be refused, rejected, or resisted? Describe that situation.

(3) How does David react to Nabal’s hostility? How does Abigail react to this crisis?

➤ (4) What were your attitudes and actions after your request for help was refused? Were you mad and did you think “*I’ll fix or show that person!*”? What happened?

➤ (5) In the confrontational situation when your request for help was refused, did anyone intervene or mediate for you? If so, who/how? — What was the result?

➤ (6) Have you ever mediated between two workers or employees, or even between a supervisor and a worker when the junior person was angry and about to take hostile action against a boss or person in power? What did you do, and what happened?

PRAYER: Ask the Lord to show you when and where you have had — or now have — attitudes and even actions of revenge against someone, maybe even your boss! Repent of this, seek God’s forgiveness, and ask the Holy Spirit to change your heart and mind about this person — your boss.



## 7 — Day 3

“In a meeting with a C.E.O. and his senior staff, the C.E.O. was under incredible pressure. When his colleagues suggested that a planning process would take several weeks, he snapped, ‘*We can finish that in fifteen minutes.*’ A soft-spoken staffer commented, ‘*Well, it’s just not that easy.*’ The C.E.O. retreated and within moments was laughing at the absurdity of his statement. He is a person of strong opinions with a powerful job; yet people are not afraid to challenge him because he is down-to-earth, self aware, and really smart. He listens — even when he doesn’t like the message.”

*Best Practice: Ideas and Insights from the World’s Foremost Business Thinkers* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2003), 356.

### **Employee’s Lesson about Revenge — from God’s Perspective** (1 Sam 25:23-44)

(1) Are CEOs, company presidents, or organizational leaders you work for or know open and teachable or close-minded and know-it-alls? What does Abigail bring to David . . .

(a) Materially and tangibly? — Why does she do this?

(b) Spiritually and intangibly? — What is her argument and reasoning, and why?

➤ (2) When you have been a mediator or intervener, what did you “bring to” the confrontation and how did you work toward a resolution in the situation?

(3) What occurred when Abigail returns home to Nabal? Why? — What spiritually and physiologically happened to Nabal?

(4) How does David react, hearing that Nabal is dead? Later, what happens to Abigail?

➤ (5) How and when can you intercede for a coworker, colleague, or even a spouse?

PRAYER: Almighty God, enable me (a) to allow You to defend me against my enemies, (b) to take not revenge into my own hands, and (c) to know that You will bring justice to the workplace — and to know You are there with me . . . just as You were with David.

## 7 — Day 4

“Some people find it hard to forgive because they believe that \to cease being angry lets the person off the hook or shows that it is acceptable for people to treat them in ways that are painful to them. Forgiving someone, however, is not a promise to forget or to believe that other person was not responsible, nor is it a statement that what was done was not serious, or is it permission to repeat the offense. . . . Forgiving is only a decision to no longer hate, to let go of your anger in order to heal yourself, to give yourself some peace”

Roy H. Lubit, *Coping with Toxic Managers Subordinates... and Other Difficult People* (New York: FT Prentice Hall Financial Times, 2004), 205

### **Employee Has Second Opportunity to Harm Leader** (1 Sam 26:1-25)

(1) Holding anger and resentment, as Lubit points out, can be as damaging to the hater — maybe more so — than to the hated. As Saul hatefully seeks David, did David know Saul’s movements and operations?

(2) What does the soldier accompanying David on this special mission say when they discover Saul asleep? When David could harm or kill Saul, what action does he take?

(3) After sneaking out of Saul’s tent, what does David do? What does he state clearly to Saul about his actions and his attitude toward the king?! How does Saul respond, again?

➤ (4) Do you have “second” or periodic opportunities to “harm” or “subvert” your supervisor? If so, when, where, and how? What did you do in such a situation(s)?

➤ (6) What is your attitude toward your boss, i.e., how do you as a Christian perceive him or her in his/her leadership position? Have you had any incidents causing you unpleasantness or pain with your boss? Were you irritated, frustrated, or angry?

PRAYER: Lord, show me any hate or animosity in my heart for my boss (and for any others). Forgive me, cleanse me, and change me through Jesus Christ. Grant me your grace and perspective toward this person(s), as You have toward me in the One crucified.

## 7 — Day 5

“What are the possible outcomes when confronting a difficult boss? Here are a few: You may lose favor and be pigeonholed in a job. You could be fired. You might end up enduring more overt or covert punishment. Things could stay the same. Conditions could actually improve!

The results may be positive, neutral, or negative. The important thing is that you have been respectful and have confronted the situation positively. Don’t expect results right away, but continue to pray and work through the problem. At least you will know that you’ve achieved your goals and done what you could. You can now leave your desire for change in the hand of God!

Paul Tomlinson, *How a Man Handles Conflict*, Life Skills for Men series, edited by David Hazard (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 92.

### **Employee Fears and Flees Leader** (1 Sam 27:1-12)

(1) Tomlinson lists several outcomes of working for and confronting a bad boss. Since David still fears Saul’s threats, where and among whom does he go?

(2) Who are these people, and what is their relationship to Israel and King Saul?

- (3) If you have or have had serious difficulties working for your boss, have you ever had or do you have any tendencies and temptations to “go over to enemies” or side with critics of this person? Why and how? Think about the aspects and processes that might lead you in that direction? — and the consequences.
  
- (4) How can you avoid or prevent this betrayal, either in actions or just in attitude? If things really got that bad, what options and courses of action do you have?
  
- (5) Read Psalm 56, whose “ascription” (under the Psalm number title) says David wrote this when he fled Saul and found refuge among the Philistines. When you are “*afraid*” (56:3) in your workplace, what do you do?

PRAYER: On our United States currency it says, “*In God We Trust*” — But do we really? Pray that the Lord God will enable you, in difficult work situations or problems with your boss, to seek Him, to ask for His guidance, and to trust Him for assistance.

## 7 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications

(1) Have you ever had the opportunity, in relationship to your boss, to do “harm,” to “subvert,” or even to take revenge against this supervisor of yours? If so . . .

(a) Describe the occasion and opportunity you had to “harm” your boss?

(b) What did you do, why, and what were the results?

(c) Did that situation or a similar situation ever occur a second or third time? What did you do and what happened on these occasions?

(2) When you truly have been wronged by another person, were you upset enough to think, plan, and take revenge in some manner or do something subversive? If so . . .

(a) Describe what occurred?

(b) How did you feel in response, and how did you feel about taking revenge?

(3) Compare reactive responses and revenge which you might take?

(a) Reactions to being wronged:

(b) Results for other person and you:

#1

#2

#3

#4

## **8 SELECTION: BOSS' BIZARRE BEHAVIOR & EMPLOYEE'S BEHAVIOR**

### **8 — Day 1**

This company founder had some unique quirks. He set up a firing range in his office, where he and his assistants shot targets at lunchtime. He once threw his accountants' books out the window; then he told them to put all sales income in a barrel, and when employees needed to be paid, to take cash out of the barrel. This leader was a non-drinker, and he forbid any tobacco in his factories. After talking with a horticulturist, he started pulling weeds out of the company lawn — for his sandwiches. He thought if you shampooed with rusty water, it prevented hair loss.

Most distressing about this boss' attitudes and actions was his attacks against labor unionists and Jews. He not only resisted unions but he had goons beat-up anyone trying to organize workers into labor unions — his chief anti-labor thug kept lions and tigers at his home. His biased loyalty to this leader enabled him to become a surrogate son to his boss. This leader's anti-Semitism included buying and using a local newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, to criticize and harangue Jews. He even wanted to exhume the body of John Wilkes Booth to prove that President Lincoln's assassination had been conducted by Jewish bankers.

Adapted from John Gove, *Made in America: The True Stories Behind the Brand Names That Built a Nation* (New York: Berkley Books, 2001), 89-92.

### **Under Stress, Leader Reacts and Seeks Help** (1 Sam 28:1-14)

(1) Some bosses like Henry Ford exhibit strange behavior, even though they have great leadership skills and successes. As the Philistines gather against Saul, what does he do? When God did not answer (cf. 1 Sam 13:8) from whom did Saul seek spiritual guidance?

- (2) Do people today do things like this? What, how, when, where, and why?
- (3) In seeking guidance, direction, etc. for life decisions or situational difficulties,
  - (a) What are godly and Biblical ways to do this?
  - (b) What are non-Christian and unbiblical ways?

➤ (4) Is your boss a Christian? If so, how do you perceive her/him? If not, does she/he have spiritual interests or views? What? How can you better understand your boss?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me wisdom and insight when my boss acts in bizarre ways, that I might have your perspective in both my reactions and my relationships in such situations.

## 8 — Day 2

“Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac.” (Henry Kissinger)

“I have many faults, but being wrong isn’t one of them.” (Jimmy Hoffa)

Carmen Dinino, Gayle Lanier, and Cynthia Stone. *How to Survive Bad Bosses* (Austin, TX: Bright Books, 1996), 13, 15.

### **Leader Learns What — Again** (1 Sam 28:15-28)

(1) Enjoying power, as did the above former Secretary of State and President of the Teamsters Union respectively, can make one impervious to their flaws and mistakes. How did Samuel react to Saul? How did Saul react to Samuel, here and in the past? Why do you think God’s Word says Samuel was not pleased that Saul had sought him?

➤ (2) Do you or have you ever become impatient when God does not or did not quickly answer your prayers or cries for help, guidance, or resolution when you were in a difficult situation? Reflect on a couple such times? How did you respond or react? How did God finally respond to you and/or to the situation?

(a) What approaches, actions, or reactions — when God does not seem to hear you, provide a clear “answer,” or give precise direction

(b) Are these Biblical principles for seeking God’s will or walking with Him? — How can you strengthen your seeking the Lord and His leading in such stressful times?

(c) What are the critical elements in seeking God’s help and answers for our lives?

(3) Are eating and depression sometimes connected? If so, how and why?

**PRAYER:** Pray that you will be responsive to — and even seek out — mature Christians for their example and instruction about life’s predicaments and God’s principles. Ask the Lord to give you a teachable mind, heart, and will — especially when you are working under a bad or difficult boss.

## 8 — Day 3

Those who worked with or wrote about the good-to-great leaders continually used words like *quite, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understanding, did not believe his own clippings*; and so forth.

Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 27.

### **Among Strangers, What Is Said about Employee** (1 Sam 29:1-11)

➤ (1) As Collins notes about great people, it is others — not themselves — who say complimentary things about them. Under stressful work situations, especially if you are finding it difficult to work for your boss, how do you continue to do what is expected of you? Do you still take initiatives in your work performance, and do you ever go “the second mile” (see Jesus’ admonition in Mt 5:41) in your work? Or have you “fled” interaction with your boss and in some ways with your job itself? How/Why? — Discuss.

(2) As David operated in the areas of Israel’s enemies and even interacted with those who opposed Saul and the Hebrews, what did they say about him?

➤ (3) Consider some in your organization in comparison to you . . .

(a) Are there leaders, coworkers, or employees who might side with your boss — and disagree with you — on organizational problems, conflicts, issues, etc.?

(b) Are there those who disagree with you spiritually or morally? Explain.

➤ (4) Do the colleagues and coworkers listed above, even leaders and supervisors...

(a) Include you in all their interactions, activities, etc.?

(b) Speak complementarily or critically about you, your actions and attitudes?

PRAYER: Lord, enable my work conduct and character to be, by Your Spirit and grace, such that others may “*see my good works and glorify you*” — not me (Mt 5:16).

## 8 — Day 4

“In the fall of 1981 . . . twenty-three year old Magic Johnson made sports headlines by convincing the team’s owner to fire the coach. . . . He was incensed that the coach insisted on a deliberate, half-court playing style that Magic saw ill-suited to individuals and team strengths. He believed his and his teammates’ distinctive abilities were best used in a spontaneous, fast-paced offense he should direct. . . . Magic was confident that he knew the other players’ strengths. He wanted them utilized, and he was opposed to forcing players to adopt a contrive format. . . . What Magic instinctively knew, and what we all need to remember, is that teamwork, effectively performed is not a snap-together procedure . . . no set of expectations for someone’s performance is realistic without first familiarizing yourself with how that individual sees the situation and what he or she can do best.”

Samuel A. Culbert and John B. Ullmen, *Don’t Kill the Bosses! — Escaping the Hierarchy Trap* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2001), 116-17.

### **Under Stress, Employee Reacts and Leads Against Adversaries** (1 Sam 30:1-15)

(1) Understanding and utilizing one’s players and their skills is critical for a coach to be successful — or any organizational leader to succeed. What challenges does David now face? Why were his men upset and distressed? How did David respond to this crisis?

➤ (2) Have you faced something stressful in personal relationships, with your boss or even with someone else recently? How did you respond?

➤ (3) Do you think it is weakness (or even foolish), when facing a crises or challenge to pray first before you tackle the situation and work on the problem? Why/Why not?

(4) How does David divide his men? — Why? Was it “fair” and/or wise? Why/Why not?

➤ (5) Have you ever been involved when a boss divided personnel and gave out different difficulties of tasks? — Did you/others think it was fair? Why/Why not? Have you ever done that with people you supervised? How did others respond?

(6) How does he treat the captive or detainee whom his men found?

PRAYER: O Granter of gifts to people: help me identify, affirm, and use others’ gifts.



## 8 — Day 5

“Share your profits with all your associates, and treat them as partners. In turn, they will treat you as a partner, and together you will all perform beyond your wildest expectations. Remain a corporation and retain control if you like, but behave as a servant leader in a partnership.”

Sam Walton with John Hay, *Sam Walton: Made in America*  
— *My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 314.

### **How Does Employee Treat and Lead Personnel** (1 Sam 30:16-31)

(1) As Sam Walton did in Wal-Mart Stores, sharing success and profits with all employees generates good workplace morale and motivation. How did David and his men do so in this conflict and challenge? After the victory, what was the debated question about dividing plunder they captured? What does David decide as leader of all these men, and what was his reasoning?

➤ (2) Have you ever been involved with an organization where some workers or members were given more challenging tasks but others were given less difficult roles — yet both groups executed their jobs successfully? How were the two groups recognized, praised, rewarded, etc. — equally or differently? How did all employees feel about this?

➤ (3) How and in what situations, would you — as a leader — try to follow David’s example of equal reward for those with the sword and those with the supplies? What do you think this does for the morale and cohesion of any group or organization?

(4) Why did David also share some plunder with leaders and people of Judah and throughout the region where “*his men had roamed*” (30:31)?

➤ (5) What might be situational applications for you to share with those around you?

PRAYER: O Lord God, You have blessed me with many good things. Make me the kind of person, employee or leader, who ensures that colleagues and all are recognized, remunerated, and rewarded properly for their work performance.

## **8 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) Does your boss or supervisor exhibit strange or bizarre behavior? If so . . .

(a) What? Why do you think it occurs? Would others agree with your assessment?

(b) How do you, and others, respond when this behavior happens? Should you respond in any other ways? — If so, what/how?

(2) What is your reputation . . .

(a) With your boss? — Why?

(b) Among other workers, colleagues, and organizational employees? — Why?

(3) How do you respect, react, respond, and relate(e.g., favoritism or fairness) with . . .

(a) People in the same type work but not in your organization or company?

(b) Coworkers in your own organization or department?

(c) Employees or workers whom you may supervise in some capacity?

(d) Your boss(es) or superior(s) in the company?

(e) Compare and contrast how you relate to and respect each of these groups.

## **9 SUCCESSOR: BOSS FAILS; EMPLOYEE REACTS & BECOMES**

### **9 — Day 1**

“we know for a fact that about two-thirds of the people currently in leadership positions in the Western world will fail; they will then be fired, demoted, or kicked upstairs. The most common reason for their failure will be their inability to build or maintain a team. Their inability to build a team will be a function of certain dysfunctional dispositions, interpersonal tendencies that are usually invisible during job interviews or assessment center exercises. These tendencies usually become apparent when people are under pressure or when they let down their guard.”

David L. Dotlich and Peter C. Cairo, *Why CEOs Fail: The 11 Behaviors That Can Derail Your Climb to the Top — and How to Manage Them* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), xv.

### **Leader/Boss Fails and Falls** (1 Sam 31:1-13)

(1) Under pressure, the strengths and weaknesses of leaders and bosses emerge. Who pressed hard against the Israelites? What happened to King Saul, and how did he die? With their leader dead, what did the soldiers do?

- (2) Has your difficult boss faced “enemies” or “adversarial” individuals, people, groups or forces? If so, who were these, and why did they oppose your boss?
  
- (3) Did your boss experience any setback? How did others in the organization react?
  
- (4) Concerning your boss’ “failure,” how did you
  - (a) Think (your attitude)?
  
  - (b) Feel (your concern)?
  
  - (b) React (your behavior)?

PRAYER: Almighty God, You “*bring down rulers from their positions and You raise up the humble*” (Lk 1:52). Grant me humility and compassion for the proud — even for my difficult boss or supervisor — if he or she fails or falls . . . for surely there will be those times when I fail and fall too!

## 9 — Day 2

“Blending is any behavior by which you reduce the difference between you and another in order to meet them where they are and move to common ground. The result of blending is an increase in rapport. . . . Blending is an essential communications skill. It’s something people do automatically and naturally when they share a common vision, care about each other, want to deepen a relationship. . . . No one cooperates with anyone who seems to be against them. The fact is, in human relations there is no middle ground. Unconsciously or consciously, people want to know, ‘*Are you with me or not?*’ You come across as either hot or cold to the relationship perceived as being on common ground or worlds apart.”

Rick Brickman and Rick Kirschner. *Dealing with People You Can’t Stand: How to Bring Out the Best in People at Their Worst* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994; revised and updated 2002), 36-37.

### **Employee Seeks Info about Leader** (2 Sam 1:1-10)

(1) Having good rapport is key if relationships are to be productive. What were the recent operational results of the leadership (a) of David and (b) of Saul? How would you describe their interpersonal relationship? — How productive was each style, and why?

(2) How did word about Saul’s death come to David? Why do you think he is asking?

➤ (3) Do you seek info about your boss? Why? — to be curious, critical, or supportive?

➤ (4) When you hear critical talk, rumors, or (even) facts about your boss — especially if he or she is difficult (or if you had a recent conflict) — what are your reactions?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, David grew in his appreciation and respect for Saul — even though Saul sought to harm or even him — as his king and boss plus as “your anointed”. Lord, I pray that you would give me Your attitude, perspective, and concern for my workplace and especially for my boss — I might genuinely care about and be supportive of my supervisor under whom You have placed me, O Sovereign Lord.

## 9 — Day 3

“We were very close to our employees. We understood their jobs and shared much of their lives with them. We also were learning which of our people had management potential, although sometimes we learned the hard way. Once we promoted a man, a good worker, to be the manger of our machine shop. A few days later he came to see me. He said he was having a tough time managing and wanted me to come out to the ship and tell his people that he was their boss. *‘If I have to do that,’* I said, *‘you don’t deserve to be their boss.’*”

David Packard, “Trust in People” in Peter Krass, editor,  
*The Book of Leadership Wisdom: Classic Writings by  
Legendary Business Leaders* (New York: John Wiley &  
Sons, 1998), 230

### **Employee Executes Justice on Behalf of Leader** (2 Sam 1:11-16)

(1) David Packard, co-founder with Bill Hewlett of Hewlett-Packard (HP) technological and electronic corporation, believed strongly in both knowing and trusting people. How did David, who may not have trusted but certainly knew his boss, immediately react . . .

(a) To learning of Saul’s death?

(b) To the one who claimed to put Saul out of his suffering and dying?

(2) Why can David respond this way to the death of Saul, who sought to destroy his young leader again and again? What is key perspective does David have about his boss?

➤ (3) In a relationship with a difficult boss or supervisor (or a coworker or colleague), how might you develop the respect and response that David had to Saul’s fall?

➤ (4) Can you really view your supervisor or boss as “the Lord’s anointed”? How?

PRAYER: Lord, show me how well I really know my boss, or not — Do I sincerely want him or her to succeed, even if she or he is difficult, or I secretly hope she or he fails and falls? O God, You are sovereign over my life and my workplace job under this boss. Enable and encourage me to see this situation as Your will for me at this time in my life — working under this boss as Your “*anointed*,” and may I be loyal and supportive.

## 9 — Day 4

*“How the mighty have fallen . . .  
How the mighty have fallen in battle . . .  
How the mighty have fallen . . . .”*

2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27

### **Employee Laments in Song over Leader** (2 Sam 1:17-27)

➤ (1) If your bad boss “fell” or failed in some way, publicly or privately — or even suddenly died — could you lament and mourn as David did for Saul?

(2) What was David’s relationship . . .

(a) With Jonathan?

(b) With Saul?

(3) Yet what does David say in a lament song about Saul, after his boss-king, had fallen? Does David mention anything about the very difficult times he had with Saul? On what does David focus about this organizational leader who was his boss? Why?

➤ (4) If or when your bad boss makes a mistake or fails significantly at something, do you respond with David’s attitude and actions? Why is this so hard to do? How might you develop David’s perspective — even and especially about a difficult boss?

➤ (5) What might you say to coworkers critical of a boss when he or she fails or falls? Why? — For what reasons? How might you change your attitude about your boss?

PRAYER: Pray about your attitude toward your boss and your relationship — thanking God for new insights about this throughout this study of David and Saul — that you might better serve and support your boss . . . doing so, as you serve Jesus Christ in your workplace and relationships.

## 9 — Day 5

“Well begun is half done” (Ancient Roman writer Horace)

“When ever you are asked if you can do a job, tell ’em ‘*Certainly I can!*’ Then get busy and find out how to do it.” (President Theodore Roosevelt)

Perry M. Smith, *Rules and Tools for Leaders: A Down-to-Earth Guide to Effective Managing* (Garden City Park, NJ: Avery Publishing Group, 1998), 17.

### **Employee Becomes the Leader — and Boss** (2 Sam 2:1-7)

(1) After being an employee or worker for a long time, many of us — even in small groups, clubs, or local organizations — will become the leader, the boss, and we will need to take charge. After lamenting Saul’s death, what status or position does David assume and what is the first action he takes?

(2) What does David do to those who followed Saul? — What could he have done?

(3) David “the employee and subordinate” is now in what status and position?!

➤ (4) Think about a time you may become a leader or boss for some people or promoted into more responsibilities — or even your current supervisor’s roles —

(a) What attitudes and actions do you believe are key as you start leading people?

(b) Specifically and practically how will you lead, motivate, care for and reward those for whom you are responsible? — list four or five principles you will seek to do:

(i)

(ii)

(iii)

(iv)

PRAYER: Lord, I may have criticized my boss or questioned my supervisor — forgive me and help me learn from past situations. Now you have given me new responsibilities as a leader. Enable me to be a good, effective boss to, for, and with others.

## **9 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) Have you ever worked for someone who was a very difficult supervisor or just a bad boss, who had a serious or dramatic fall or failure as a leader? If so . . .

(a) What were your thoughts and feelings plus your attitudes and actions?

(b) Why do you think you reacted that way?

(2) If you have bad boss now, do you — be honest — wish that person success or failure?

(3) How might you develop a different, spiritual attitude — and actions — toward your boss, similar to the mental, emotional, and spiritual development David went through concerning his boss, Saul? What would be your attitude if you replaced your boss because he or she failed?

(4) If or when (or even since) your boss might fail or fall . . .

(a) How might you speak “for” this person (cf. David’s words about Saul)?

(b) For what aspects or elements of this person’s leadership and life can you honestly be thankful and positive?

(5) When there is, has been, or will be conflict within your workplace — maybe because of poor or bad leadership — how might you seek to be a leader at some level or in some way, bring people together for the good of the organization?



## **10 REVIEW: YOUR BOSS, YOU & YOU AS BOSS**

### **10 — Day 1**

“The stories [1-2 Samuel] leave us wrestling with what was in Saul’s heart or David’s. But we do not in the end need to know what was in Saul’s or David’s heart. We need to know what is in our own. And wrestling with questions may help us more to discover that, than being told what the answer was for Saul or David.”

John Goldingay, *Men Behaving Badly* (London: Pasternoster, 2000), 5.

### **Summary Principles and Applications**

➤ (1) Write down two or three principles which you learned from this Biblical study:

(a)

(b)

(c)

➤ (2) Write out two or three practical applications for you in your job, workplace, and especially in relationship with your boss:

(a)

(b)

(c)

PRAYER: Ask God to give you insights and applications as you review this study of David and Saul, on your own and with your group members. Pray to the Lord for your life and spiritual growth: “*Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*” (Ps 119:11)

## 10 — Day 2

“Everyone in this society lives and works in some kind of organization, group, or system. Beginning with the family, moving into the school, the workplace, clubs, and civic organizations, most of us spend the majority of our lives with organizations of relating to organizations. In this society, the person who cannot function organizationally is handicapped. We need to understand every aspect of organizational life.”

Anne Wilson Schaef and Diane Fassel, *The Addictive Organization: Why We Overwork, Cover Up, Pick Up the Pieces, Please the Boss, and Perpetuate Sick Organizations* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988, 1990), 1.

### **Your Organization and Your Boss** (or others with whom you are having conflicts)

- (1) We all do work in and/or relate to some organizations. In this study, what have you learned about the development of your organization and your boss?
  
- (2) Compare and contrast what feelings and thoughts you sometimes have toward your boss versus your actions and interactions with others?
  
- (4) How will you — like Samuel (1 Sam 12:23-24) — where the Lord has placed you as a company employee working for your boss specifically and weekly...
  - (a) Weekly “*pray for*” your company and your boss?
  
  - (b) Regularly “*teach*” and live out what is “*good and right*”?
  
  - (c) Daily “*fear the Lord and serve Him* [& your boss] *faithfully with all your heart*”?
  
- (5) Has this study of Saul and David helped you understand your boss a little better, and your relationship with him/her? How? — In what ways?

PRAYER: O Lord, You are sovereign over all things. I do believe that You placed me in my workplace, that You have a purpose for me there, and that You are there with me. Enable me to be, as Jesus says, “*Wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves*” (Mt 10:16) in my job situation and relations. As You are daily gracious and forgiving to me through Jesus Christ, may I be so toward other people, coworkers and colleagues, and my boss.

## 10 — Day 3

“If A is a success in life, then A equals X plus Y plus Z. Work is X, Y is play, and Z is keeping your mouth shut.” (Albert Einstein)

Stephen M. Pollan and Mark Levine, *Fire Your Boss*  
(New York: HarperResource, 2004), 230.

“Sometimes, of course, the boss is not quite so ready to listen or to learn. The superior may even subject subordinates to misdirection or mistreatment, but the culture of the Marines requires that subordinates exercise leadership whether or not any is displayed above — and despite whatever is coming down from above. Subordinates must master what is right to do regardless of what their bosses want done.

Marine culture even stresses what most hierarchies abhor: going over your boss’ head. It must be done with clarity of purpose, but it can be done without fatal repercussion. Indeed, Marine policy fosters jumping however high you need to go to find a solution. The purpose is not to criticize or undermine the boss, but to resolve the problem

‘*If you have a bad boss and it’s harmful to the institution, you have to take it up,*’ advised former Marine Commandant Charles Krulak, and it is inevitable that will have to do so sometime in your career. ‘*You will face that time,*’ he warned, ‘*and you will face that time before you are ready for it. And when you face it, draw inside and on your character to do the right thing.*’”

Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss so  
You Both Win* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 179

### **You as Employee**

➤ (1) List two or three specific ways this study — and what God has taught you — has made a difference in how you think about, relate to, and work for your boss?

(a)

(b)

(c)

PRAYER: Lord, I need to have Your perspective on people — and myself: both realistic about who we are as sinners, and yet gracious about others as “made in Your image” and whom You desire to redeem in Jesus Christ by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Teach me, lead me, and grow me in my workplace and with my boss, to know when and where it is “*the time to be silent and the time to speak*” (Eccles 3:7).

## 10 — Day 4

“We cannot drive out fear, or any other so-called negative emotions, without the risk of driving out the energy we want — excitement and enthusiasm. Daniel Goleman, author of *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, writes, ‘*When the dictates of a boss determine the emotions a person must express, the result is an estrangement from one’s own emotions.*’ For example, when a manager suggests, either directly or subtly, that he or she wants everyone to feel part of one big happy team but never fearful, angry or sad, people are likely to shut their genuine emotions down altogether, and put on a happy face. Goleman calls this ‘*emotional tyranny.*’ When we fail to acknowledge fear, we also extinguish passion. The result is a robotic workplace.”

Best Practice: *Ideas and Insights from the World’s  
Foremost Business Thinkers* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus  
Publishing, 2003), 50-51.

- (1) Have you ever experienced fear in a workplace? When and where?
  
- (2) How and why was this generated? By whom and what happened? — Was it addressed and eliminated? Why?/Why not?

### **You as Boss**

- (3) Write out two or three principles which you have learned from this study about any leadership role or responsibilities you now have — or may have in the future:
  - (a)
  
  - (b)
  
  - (c)

PRAYER: Thank you, O Lord, for the principles and applications I have learned from this study about the unique employee-employer relationship of David and Saul, a difficult boss and a godly subordinate. I pray You would give me, like David, “*a heart after Your heart*” (1 Sam 13:14).

**10 — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

(1) What one or two key principles have you learned about . . .

(a) Saul as a boss?

(i)

(ii)

(b) David as an employee?

(i)

(ii)

(2) What two things have you learned about the development of...

(a) Your organization?

(i)

(ii)

(b) Your boss?

(i)

(ii)

(3) What two applications did you learned about working under a difficult or bad boss . . .

(a) About your specific boss or supervisor?

(i)

(ii)

(b) About you as an employee in this situation?

(i)

(ii)

**PRAYER:** Pray that God would help you incorporate the above principles and applications into your life, workplace, and relationship with your boss.

## **11 PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES WITH THEIR BOSS**

### **11 — Day 1**

#### *Introduction*

This week we will reflect on a few verses and some key principles about how we as Christian employee might relate to our workplace and to our boss — especially in situation if we have a bad one.

The Bible texts for the next six day are short verses. These speak directly to “slaves” working for “masters” within the institution of slavery in the Roman Empire of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D. However, in general, their situation was not as brutal as slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. Slaves certainly had no rights; they were property of and owned by someone. Yet the Lord is concerned about them, and his word gives them guidance. We should read “workers” or “employees” instead of “slaves” for our application.

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“As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master [and] as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy.”

Psalm 123:2

#### **(1) SEEK GOD’S MERCY for your workplace situation**

(1) In the above verse, what do you think the slave and the maid seek from their master and mistress respectively?

(2) What do you seek from the Lord, and in what circumstances? How do you seek him?

(3) Jesus instructs his followers about prayer (Mt. 6:5-15). How does he say we should open in prayer to God? What does the address “Our father in heaven” mean to you?

(4) How can you apply Jesus’ words in Mt 11:28-29 to your workplace situation? How can you apply Ps 123:2 to your relationship with your boss?

PRAYER: O God, my Father in heaven, I thank you that you know my life situations and needs. I praise you that you are interested and involved in my workplace through the Spirit. I have joy and comfort that you are merciful to me through Jesus Christ in my relationship with my boss.

## 11 — Day 2

“Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. How is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

1 Peter 2:18-21

### (2) **SUBMIT WITH RESPECT to your boss**

(1) What do you believe the word “submit” means above? Why do you think Peter (and Paul too in Eph 6:5) talk about “with respect” in our relationship with our boss?

(2) It is easy to respect a good boss. But how can you respect a “harsh” boss or bad one?

(3) If you have a bad boss, consider . . .

(a) What is God’s attitude toward this person?

(b) How does the Lord want you to related to this person?

(4) For what should a Christian worker never suffer? Why not? — What your reasons?

(5) What will be the results of our biblical attitude and actions to a harsh or bad boss?

(a) From God’s perspective?

(b) From the boss’ perspective?

PRAYER: O God, I do struggle at time with my attitude toward harsh or bad leaders over me. Sometimes their behavior is unfair and undeserved. Enable me to see your perspective on this workplace situation, and also help me to have your perspective toward my boss.

**11 — Day 3**

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it . . . with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

Colossians 3:22

**(3) Have a *SINCERE HEART* obeying your boss as you would Christ**

- (1) How do you define sincerity?
- (2) Describe a sincere person. Now describe and contrast an insincere person.
- (3) On what is sincerity based or generated?
- (4) Are you even insincere with your boss? Explain — When? Where? How? Why?
- (5) In what circumstances might you be insincere? Why? What factors can influence us toward insincere behavior?
- (6) Are you even insincere with God? How and why?
- (7) Paul, in the above verse, links what with sincerity toward a master or employer?
- (8) How might having “reverence for the Lord” influence your attitude and actions toward your boss — even and maybe especially a difficult one?

PRAYER: O Lord, forgive me for my insincerity at times — with you and with others. Show me what causes me to act that way. As David prayed and wrote, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast heart within me.”



**11 — Day 4**

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters . . . not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.”

Ephesians 6:6

**(4) SEEN OR UNSEEN obey and work for your boss**

(1) Have you ever heard the exhortation, “Look busy!” What does that mean, and in what context is it used?

(2) When we are performing or doing something well, why do we like to have other people watching us? Do you like your boss to see you do a job well? Why?

(3) If a boss’ eyes are not on workers, what — if any — difference does that make? If so, what difference and why?

(4) Do you work, perform, and function just as hard and just as productive whether your supervisor is watching or not — whether your boss know how you are doing or not? Explain.

(5) When you are working, if the boss’ eye is not on you, whose eye is? What difference does that — or should that — make for you at your workplace or in any place?

PRAYER: I confess, Heavenly Father, that I don’t always work or perform as hard when my supervisor is not watching or is not knowledgeable of my work. Forgive me, for that honors neither my boss nor you as my Lord. Help me consistently to do good work, whether I’m seen or unseen — knowing you always see me, and that when others see me they might glorify you in heaven, as Jesus said (Mt 5:16)

## 11 — Day 5

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.”  
Ephesians 6:7

### **(5) SERVE WHOLEHEARTEDLY your boss as if you are serving the Lord**

(1) What does it mean to “serve wholeheartedly”? Contrast this with someone being “half-hearted.”

(3) Read the story about the Israelite spies doing reconnaissance on the Promised Land (Num 13:17-14:9).

(a) What was the difference between the majority report and the minority report? Was it the facts about the land and its inhabitants? If not, then what?

(b) How did Caleb report and respond to this discussion? What did God say about his perspective?

(4) Are you ever half-hearted? When and where? In what relationships and/or what situations? Why do you think this happens?

(5) How might you be more “wholehearted” in your work, at your workplace, and with your boss? Be specific.

(6) Do you think Jesus’ criticism of the Christians at Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22) for being “lukewarm” (Rev 3:15-16) might apply to you at work or with your boss? If so, how?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I do not want to be lukewarm in my faith or half-hearted in my work. Forgive me, and empower me by your Spirit to have a full commitment in everything I do — for I am reminded that I am serving you.

**11 — Day 6**

“since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven.”  
Ephesians 6:9

**(6) SERVE YOUR MASTERS, EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY**

(1) What are your thoughts and reflections after reading/hearing Bob Dylan’s 1979 song “Gotta Serve Somebody”? How it challenge your faith? Do you think the song means we cannot serve our employer or our boss? Explain your answer.

(2) Paul’s above exhortation addresses masters, not slaves. However, does it have any point or application for us as employees and workers? If so, what?

(3) How to the two concepts, serving an earthly boss and a heaven master, interrelate?

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**Future Use of This Study**

(1) What elements of this study were especially beneficial for you?

(2) Are there ways this study might be improved? If so, how?

- (3) If you would personally like to help improve this study, please contact the author, who will appreciate hearing from you! Email him at: chaplainbillw@hotmail.com
- (4) If you have grown and been blessed by this study of David and Saul, would you be willing to lead others through it? If so, who can you invite into a small group and lead through this study? How, when, and where could you start such a study?

**PRAYER:** Thank the Lord for specific things you have learned about his perspective and principles for your and your workplace situation, your boss, and your relationship and supportive work for your boss. Pray God will bless you, your boss, your relationship with your boss, your work, and your company — for glory of Jesus Christ plus the good of employees and those whom you serve.

## **[11] — Group Discussion Notes & Applications**

This past week's individual study topics and today's group discussion focus on helping employees perceive their workplace and perform their work under a boss, even a bad one.

Reviewing, here are six practical biblical principles for employees with their boss:

**Submit with respect** to your boss

**Seek God's mercy** for your workplace situation

Have a **Sincere heart** obeying your boss, as you would Christ

**Seen or unseen** obey and work for your boss

**Serve wholeheartedly** your boss, as if you are serving the Lord

**Serve your Masters, earthly and heavenly**

(1) Which above principle and its biblical text was a new thought and challenge for you?

(2) Which of the above principles is most difficult for you with your boss? Why? How might you work on this one (or on these)? Can the Lord help you on this? If so, how?

(3) Do you think the above principles mean employees and workers should blindly obey and follow their boss? Why or why not? — Explain.

(4) Have your attitude and actions toward your boss been changed by this week's study and the entire small-group study of the David-Saul relationship? If so, in what ways?

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“Workers, cooperate with those over you with humility and respect and with the same kind of loyalty you give to Christ — not for praise or promotion, but as Christ's workers, doing the will of God from the heart and carrying out your work with a good attitude as though the Lord, not man, were your employer.”<sup>369</sup>

Ephesians 6:5

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<sup>369</sup>Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles: A Colloquial Modern Translation with a Southern Accent. The Letter to the Christians in Birmingham [Ephesians] 6:5* (New York: A Koinonia Publication Association Press, 1968), 113.

## APPENDIX C

**WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS:**

**Exploring Biblical Principles  
and  
Practical Applications  
from  
The David-Saul Employee-Employer  
Relationship**

**Leader's Guide**

**By  
R. O. "Bill" Weimer**

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## **A “Leader’s Guide” for Small-Group Bible Study**

### **Introduction**

*“Take me to your leader”* — the old opening line put in the mouths of factious aliens who have just landed, unknown to them, on planet earth and confront an ordinary earthling — now related to you.

You are or you soon will be a small-group Bible study leader.

Enlisted and encouraged to be a small-group Bible study leader for the first time, you might feel like an alien who has landed in an unknown environment. But you are to be the leader. In reality, you will be just like all the other participants in your small group — ordinary Christians studying, discussing, and applying God’s Word for your lives in today’s world. It is the purpose of this material to excite you about being both a leader and a participant of this small group studying a workplace boss situation through the David-Saul relationship. Even if you have led a small group in the past, this may be a good review and refresher for you.

The key to being effective as a group leader is to remember that you are a stimulator of Bible discussion, not a source of all biblical and spiritual knowledge. You are a question-guider, not an answer-giver. The old giving-a-fish-versus-teaching-a-man-to-fish truism can be paraphrased here: “Give people a Bible answer, and you feed them for a moment — But teach people to do their own personal Scripture study by asking questions, examining texts and contexts, and applying biblical principles for their lives, and you give them skills for a life-time of spiritual growth.”

### **This Leader’s Guide**

This booklet will give information and discussion suggestions to help you as a small-group leader. It has two components:

(1) Helps on Leading Small-Group Discussions. This section provides guidelines and tips about how to be good small-group discussion leader.

(2) Helps on the Biblical Texts and the Workplace Topics. This section provides some notes on the weekly-daily biblical texts and on the workplace topics, and it provides two or three suggested focus points for each small-group session.

You have an exciting and rewarding experience ahead of you! The David-Saul employee-employer relationship is unique in all of Scripture. You and your small-group members will see real life patterns and principles in these OT passages, which are quite applicable to your work situation — especially when Christians may be working under bad bosses. May the Lord guide, bless, and use you both as a small-group leader and also as a participant — as you and your small-group colleague Christians explore God’s Word for principles and applications in your world and workplace as followers of Jesus Christ.

## **(1) Helps on Leading Small-Group Discussions**

### **Suggestions and Resources**

There are many helpful resources for leading small groups and Bible discussion groups. Most Bible study booklets today have a section at the beginning or in the back with various section titles: “Leader’s Notes,” “Suggestions for Group Leaders,” “Facilitator’s Job Description,” or “Guidelines for Group Leaders.” These different sources usually list the same or similar suggestions.

This guide gives you some tips about leading a group. If you want more, acquire some of the cited small-group booklets — they can be your study guide for your next small-group experience! Searching Amazon.com on the Internet for “leading small-group Bible studies” will also list an abundance of study guidebooks and resources.

### **Quoted Helps and Tips (excerpts from some of these guides)**

“At the beginning of your first time together, explain that these studies are meant to be discussions, not lectures. Encourage the members of the group to participate. However, do not put pressure on those who may be hesitant to speak during the first few sessions. You may want to suggest the following guidelines to your group:

- Stick to the topic being discussed.
- Your responses should be based on the verses that are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers.
- These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate on equal ground and for in-depth study.
- Anything said in the group is considered confidential and will not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.
- Provide time for each person present to talk if he or she feels comfortable.
- Listen attentively to each other and learn from one another.
- Pray for each other.

Don’t be content with just one answer. Ask, “What do the rest of you think?”

Don’t expect every answer to be addressed to you, even though this will probably happen at first. As group members become more at ease, they will begin to truly interact with each other. This is one sign of healthy discussion.

Periodically summarize what the group has said about the passage. This helps to draw together the various ideas mentioned and gives continuity to the study. But don’t preach.”<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Juanita Ryan, *Meeting God in Busyness: 6 Studies for Individuals or Groups*, Meeting God Bible Studies series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 37-39.

“Read and study the Bible passage thoroughly beforehand, grasping its themes and applying its teachings for yourself. Pray the Holy Spirit will “guide you into truth” so that your leadership will guide others.

Don’t be afraid of silences; some questions take time to answer and some people need time to gather courage to speak. If silence persists, rephrase your question, but resist the temptation to answer it yourself.

If someone comes up with an answer that is clearly illogical or unbiblical, ask for further clarification, “What verse suggests that to you?”

Discourage Bible-hopping and overuse of cross-references. Learn all you can from *this* passage.”<sup>371</sup>

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“Teach by asking questions, rather than by making authoritative statements. Questions can often accomplish what statements cannot. Questions were Jesus’ preferred style.

Draw out the quiet or introverted persons.

Encourage everyone’s participation; affirm the different contributions of all.”<sup>372</sup>

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These small-group leadership suggestions and tips will enable you to guide and facilitate your group into good investigation of the Scriptures and good interaction among yourselves as participants. In summary, keys to having good small-group discussion are:

- (1) Be a facilitator of group learning and discussion, not the answer person.
- (2) Prepare before the group meeting so that you understand the biblical texts, the workplace topics, and the discussion questions — then you can guide the group.
- (3) Encourage openness and interaction, not just one question followed by one answer. Over time, graciously ask the quieter participants what they think; by asking more factual oriented questions, but not simplistic ones, such participants will share.
- (4) Never embarrass anyone! If strange or unrelated comments come, treat them and the one speaking with respect — and try to draw that person and the focus back to the text and/or the topic. You might say, “*That is an interesting point / thought . . . Could we discuss that at another time?*” or “*How might that relate to this text / topic?*” But always be gracious! Building openness, trust, and fellowship are your small-group goals, as well as exploring and applying the Word for our world and workplaces.

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<sup>371</sup> R. Paul Stevens and Gerry Schoberg. *Satisfying Work: Christian Living from Nine to Five; 13 Studies for Individuals or Groups* (Colorado Springs, CO: A Shaw Book, 1989; rev. ed., 1993), 10-11.

<sup>372</sup> *Work: Serving God on the Job*, Foundations for Christian Living Series (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997), 9.



The cited study books above, providing the excerpted and quoted tips on small-group leadership, provide more than facilitator helps — they provide an actual Bible study to do as an individual and/or with a group (i.e., that is the main purpose for those books). However, there are also helpful books without included Bible studies but with focused discussions about leading small groups — authors including Nyquist,<sup>373</sup> Hunt,<sup>374</sup> Polich,<sup>375</sup> Grahmann,<sup>376</sup> and Arnold.<sup>377</sup>

Discussions about small groups in general — Bible study, fellowship, prayer, topic-foci, etc. — provide background, perspectives, and insights beyond the basic “How to Lead a Small Group” guidelines. Icenogle,<sup>378</sup> Arnold,<sup>379</sup> and Henry and Townsend<sup>380</sup> have written more exhaustive books of 260-300 pages about small-group ministries, dynamics, and leadership.

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<sup>373</sup> James F. Nyquist, *Leading Bible Discussions* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967).

<sup>374</sup> Gladys Hunt, *You Can Start a Bible Study: Making Friends, Changing Lives*, Fisherman Bible Study Guides (Colorado Springs, CO: A Shaw Book; rev. ed., 2000). Also Gladys Hunt, “How-to” *Handbook: For Inductive Bible Study Leaders* (Colorado Springs, CO: A Shaw Book, 1977).

<sup>375</sup> Laurie Polich, *Help! I’m a Small-Group Leader!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Youth Specialties, 1998).

<sup>376</sup> Bob Grahmann, *Transforming Bible Study: Understanding Scripture Like You’ve Never Read It Before* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>377</sup> Jeffrey Arnold, *Small Group Starter Kit*, Lifeguide Bible Studies (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995). Also Jeffrey Arnold, *Seven Tools for Building Effective Groups*, Pilgrimage Guide Series (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997).

<sup>378</sup> Gareth Weldon Icenogle, *Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry: An Integrational Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

<sup>379</sup> Jeffrey Arnold, *The Big Book on Small Groups* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

<sup>380</sup> Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

## **(2) Helps on the Biblical Texts and the Workplace Topics**

You probably have had or may even now have a bad boss workplace situation, or you surely know other Christians or colleagues who currently struggle in such a setting. In either case, you too are a learner before God with the Word and probably you are an employee and a coworker in some organization and workplace. A critical skill for every follower and disciple of Jesus Christ is learning personally how to interact with God's Word for our own world situations. As a small-group leader, this is what you will want to do, both for yourself and with other participants.

### **Use and Misuse of This Section**

This section provides some brief background information on the Bible texts and thoughts about the workplace topics — through which you, as group leader, will guide your small group in discussion. These suggestions are only to stimulate and supplement your own study insights. You are a participant in your small group too, reading through and reflecting on the Book of Samuel record of the David-Saul relationship for your faith and life. Therefore, you are a learner like others — before you can be a leader of others.

First, do each day's study yourself, using your Participant's Study Guide. Pray the Spirit would open the Scriptures to you, and also open you to the Scriptures. Read the opening quotation. Scan over the study questions. Then read the assigned texts, reflect on each question, and write down your answers, thoughts, and even questions. Then pray for applications using the prayer ideas each study end and, more importantly, expressing to the Lord what you have discovered, learned, and applied yourself!

### **Do Not Use Commentaries and Helps — Until...**

Second, use the helps on biblical texts and workplace topics ONLY AFTER you have studied, analyzed, and applied the day's texts and the topics yourself — plus made notes in your Participant's Study Guide. Other Christians' notes, insights, applications, and commentaries can be helpful. Nevertheless, God has inspired the Bible as authoritative to be studied, interpreted, and applied both by the Church corporately and by Christians individually. Johnny Cash insightfully notes in a quote attributed to him, "The Bible sheds a lot of light on the commentaries."<sup>381</sup> Always remember: leaders rarely can guide others through areas that they have not previously gone or studied!

For each group session, suggested questions and some ideas divide into biblical texts and workplace topics, citing appropriate group discussion questions. Suggested questions for you to ask as group leader are in *italics*. Also, when specific Bible verses referenced, they are also in *italics*.

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<sup>381</sup> "Men of Integrity: Junk-Food High — Go to the Source," *Christianity Today* (March-April 2002), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/moi/2002/002/mar/27.27.html> (accessed August 20, 2007).

### **Leader's Notes**

The comments and suggestions for you as group leader follow the weekly themes and passages in the Participant's Study Guide and lead chronologically through the David-Saul employee-employer relationship.

### **Weekly Themes — Eleven Units & Small-Group Meetings**

The first meeting forms the small group as the group leader welcomes everyone and explains the learning methodology. After that initial formation meeting, participants will study the second week's theme, daily topics, Bible readings, and reflection questions. Then those themes and topics are the discussion focus at the second small-group meeting. By this process, the group members go week-by-week and day-by-day (five days per week) through the Participant's Study Guide.

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|--|------------------------|
| [1] Introduction — Pre-Study Evaluations and Study's Purpose & Methodology |                        |
| [2] Organization and Boss: History and Background                          | 1 Sam 8:1-12:25        |
| [3] Boss' Early Success and Failures — Then Rebuke                         | 1 Sam 13:1-15:35       |
| [4] Employee Identified, Hired, and Succeeds                               | 1 Sam 16:1-17:58       |
| [5] Boss Relationship Stressful — Employee Support Needed                  | 1 Sam 18:1-19:24       |
| [6] Good Peer Friendship, Yet More Conflict with Boss                      | 1 Sam 20:1-23:29       |
| [7] Role Reversal: Ruin Opportunities — Revenge Lesson                     | 1 Sam 24:1-27:12       |
| [8] Boss' Bizarre Behavior and Employee's Behavior                         | 1 Sam 28:1-30:31       |
| [9] Boss Fails; Employee Reacts — and Becomes Boss                         | 1 Sam 31:1-2 Sam 2:7   |
| [10] Your Boss, You, and You as Boss                                       | study review & summary |
| [11] Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss                    | various texts & topics |

## **1 Intro — Pre-Study Evals and Study’s Purpose/Methodology**

First, to start your initial session as Group Leader, you should:

- Welcome everyone.
- State the title and focus of this small group or class: “Working under a Bad Boss: Exploring Biblical Principles and Practical Applications from the David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship.”
- Ask each person gives a short personal introduction — you start as the Example — telling (1) who you are, (2) what you do in a workplace setting which is the setting for this study, and (3) why you joined this study.

Second, you will have the group participants do the “Pre-Study Evaluations” — “Your Organization, Your Boss, and You” and then “David and Saul.” Explain they should NOT put their names on these sheets, which will be compiled as benchmarks for the class. At the study’s end, we will review what we all have learned. Set a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere — though you are not to answer questions, if you do share your experiences and even your struggles or mistakes, then others will feel more comfortable doing so. If you are honest and vulnerable, participants will emulate that.

Third, after collecting the participants’ two different “Evaluation Sheets,” you can generate some interaction and discussion by asking, “Is anyone presently working under a bad boss, or have you done so in the past? If so, would you share a little about your situation?” Allow two or three participants to tell about their bad boss, but do not discuss these situations at this time. Make mental notes (and later written notes) about stressful situations shared, as you and the group in coming sessions will want to discuss them and to apply some biblical principles to those specific workplace experiences.

Fourth, give a “Participant’s Study Guide” to everyone, and explain how the class or small group will work using two learning steps. First as individuals, each person will do five daily studies of 15-25 verses taking 20-25 minutes each. Have participants look at the page for Unit 2 Day 1, to see Scripture and application questions (marked by ➤). Second as a group, everyone will meet together to discuss and apply these biblical texts and workplace topics. Have them look at the page for “Unit 2 — Group Discussion Notes & Application.” Encourage them to write notes on Day pages and Group ones. Explain the study will examine the David-Saul interaction chronologically, and it will explore biblical principles for applications in our own workplaces especially when we work under a bad boss. You can explain, “If you don’t now work under a bad boss, you probably (a) will someday, and/or (b) have a friend, a family member, or a coworker who does and whom you might support and help through our study.” If there is time, you and the participants can glance at the study “Overview” of topics. Be clear: if they don’t get all the daily studies done, they are still encouraged to come to the group or class discussion!

Finally, ask if there are any questions. Hopefully, you already have had some group interaction and discussion. Encourage participants to start in the Introduction of the Participant’s Study Guide. Lastly, close this first session in prayer yourself.

## **2 Organization and Boss: History and Background**

**1 Sam 8:1-12:25**

This is the second meeting of your small group. But this is the first time you lead and facilitate the participants in discussing, exploring, and applying the biblical texts to workplace topics. It will be fun, and a learning experience too.

Remember what was said in the earlier “Introduction” about being an effective **Group Leader**: You are a stimulator of Bible discussion, not a source of all biblical and spiritual knowledge. You are a question-guider, not an answer-giver.

**Group Discussion** sessions have several purposes: (1) to explore and discuss together some of the biblical texts (you cannot cover all of the passages); (2) to apply the patterns and principles of the Word into your/the group’s daily lives and workplace situations; and (3) to nourish personal sharing, prayer, and fellowship as Christians seeking to grow in faith and following Jesus Christ.

The sections here will have ideas for you in two parts: biblical texts and workplace topics. First, it will suggest a couple biblical texts from the past week’s individual daily sessions for you and your group Participants to read aloud and then discuss briefly. Second, it will suggest a few workplace topics on which you might interact with the group and which should generate discussion about their own workplace situations and boss challenges. Profitable Bible study, by individuals and in small groups, brings together God’s Word texts and our world topics.

The below daily section ideas are only suggestions. Lead and guide the group in ways with which you are comfortable — based upon your study, reflection, and preparation of the week’s passages and the “Group Discussion” questions. Pray regularly that the Spirit will guide you and the group through this curriculum and each session. Allow the Spirit to lead some discussions in directions you might not have anticipated.

Use the “Group Discussion Notes & Applications” questions, at the end of each week’s five days of study, to guide you and the group Participants through your review, interaction, and application of past week’s readings and workplace reflections. Cross-references to the group discussion questions are cited as Q-1, etc.

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Here are suggestions for the second group session, in the format for each weekly meeting you will lead, on both biblical texts and workplace topics.

**TEXT — 1 Sam 8:1-22.** For the passages read them aloud together, rotating around the group with each person reading three or four verses (sometimes you might stop in the middle of long passages to review what is happening, before continuing). **FOCUS Q-1:** Ask, “*Why did Israel want a king, and what changes would this mean?*” Yet Israel was not “*to be like other nations*”! — It already had “*a king*”! This new institution of monarchy would alter the lives of Israelites traumatically in many ways.

TOPIC — Your Organization. It helps to know about one's own company, to understand better its methods and values of operation. FOCUS Q-2(a): Ask, *"Who can tell us about your company's history or development?"* Related questions might be: *"How did you learn about your organization and even your department? Did any of you have 'Welcome Aboard Briefings'?" "What were those like?" "Are there other ways you have learned about the history and development of your company?"*

TEXT — 1 Sam 9:1-13. Read this passage, to begin learning about Saul, who will become David's boss. Ask, *"What do we learn about Saul here?"* — his family, his person, and his loyalty/leadership. You might generate some quick discussion by asking, *"How does faith come into this situation and from whom?"* Read 1 Sam 9:14-10:9. *"How is Saul 'hired'?"* — *What was the setting and interaction for his 'interview'?"* Notice the dinner interview Samuel does, possibly to see how Saul interacts with others. It is also after a spiritual worship experience, for Samuel is a man of God and through him God is coming into Saul's life. Ask, *"In what ways will God be leading and working, according to Samuel, in Saul's life now?"* After some interaction, you should ask, *"How will Saul personally be impacted by God, in his life and for this new role?"*

TOPIC — Your Boss. Shift the same inquiry about Saul to the group participants' bosses. FOCUS Q-2(b) — *"What about your boss? What do you know about her or him?"* Get several members to share whatever they do know. Then ask, *"How did your boss get hired or arrive at the supervisory position over you?"*

FOCUS Q-3 & Q-4. Sometimes your participants will see and share textual insights ahead of your questions. Usually you can say, *"That's a great point! Could you hold it for just a moment?"* Once in awhile you may choose to discuss their anticipatory point at that time. However if you do postpone it, then a few minutes later say to the person, *"Now \_\_\_\_\_, please share what you saw in or from the text a minute ago."*

If time allows . . . TEXT — 1 Sam 10:8-27. Here FOCUS on more information about Saul. Ask, *"What is Saul like here? Why do you think he reacts this way to becoming king?"* Saul has physical, external assets and strengths — family, size, ability, etc. However, spiritually and internally, he is not as strong or consistent — as we will see.

Summarize briefly, what happens in 1 Sam 11 and 12. You will NOT be able to read all the past week's Bible passages. So do summarize the main points of chapters or large passages which you do not get to read or discuss. This will keep the chronology, the story, and the events about the David-Saul relationship tied together.

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About five minutes before the hour is over (55 minutes through the study — OR 10-15 minutes before the end IF you are doing 90 or 120 minute sessions) — you should wrap-up the discussion — even summarizing two or three main points Participants have seen and shared. Then ask them, *"Are there any specific issues for any of you at work for*

*which we can pray — this week and now?*” Then you lead in prayer, unless you sense one of the group members is comfortable doing so to close this second session.

**3 Boss' Early Success and Failures — Then Rebuke****1 Sam 13:1-15:35**

This is your third meeting of the group, so its membership should become settled. Of course, participants may be gone sometimes and you may have visitors once in awhile (have extra “Participant’s Study Guides available to give them). By now you can comfortably interact with members by their first names — Do so, as it will also help Participants get to know those whom they do not know or do not know well.

Open the small-group time — as you do each session — welcome everyone, introduce or have self-introductions of any new members, and then open with prayer.

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TOPIC — Q-1. Ask, *“Do you know how your boss started out: any challenges or successes, or even any problems or failures?”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 13:1-15. Read this passage. *“What happens here, and how does Saul respond to the situation?”* Saul seems to be trying to relate to the Lord, by sacrificing here. *“Why does Samuel criticize Saul?”* Depending upon the discussion and insight, you may need to ask, *“When the burnt offering was made, who should have done it?”*

Summarize passages about Israel having few weapons, and (yet) how Jonathan led a raiding party to defeat some Philistines! Note: Jonathan is shown to be a strong, confident leader for Israel and for his father, King Saul — here and in coming passages.

TEXT — 1 Sam 14:24-39. Read this section. *“During this battle, what policy does Saul establish? — Why, do you think he did this?”* Could this have been to keep men focused on fighting? *“But who broke the rules, even if unknowingly?! — and why?!”* Soldiers need food and drink during combat, to have energy and strength. 1 Sam 14:40-52. *“How is the ruler-breaker identified, and what happens?”* After some discussion, ask, *“Why do you think the soldiers strongly backed Jonathan?”*

TOPIC — Q-2(b). *“Has your boss ever made some crazy policies? What happened? Did anyone suffer because of those? Did anyone object to the policy? — Was it reversed?”* Can you share an example? Remember, as you share honestly, Participants will also.

TEXT — 1 Sam 15:1-15. *“What instructions does God give Saul through Samuel? Does Saul respond well or only partially well?”* 1 Sam 15:16-35. *“What different perspective on the situation does Samuel bring?! — Why?”* *“What excuses does Saul give for his actions?”* Discussion might lead to a boss’s behavior and/or even our own behavior and excuses when we don’t follow God’s directions! *“How does God, according to Samuel, see this?”* *“What action occurs, and what does Samuel say about it symbolically?”*

TOPIC — Q-3. *“How can you support or even help your boss in difficult times?”* Also then ask, *“If your boss is about to make a mistake or has made a mistake, what might you do?”* Remind the participants: understanding a “bad” boss may help their situation.



**4 Employee Identified, Hired, and Succeeds****1 Sam 16:1-17:58**

TEXT — 1 Sam 16:1-13. *“How is David identified by Samuel, really by the Lord?”*  
*“What comparison and contrasts exist between Saul and David when they were first identified and selected as God’s leaders?”* 1 Sam 16:14-23. After being called to serve the Lord, David is called to serve a leader — this might be a summary point sometime (cf. Col 3:22-25). *“What leads to David and Saul being linked together in the beginning?”*

TOPIC — Q-1. *“How were you hired or promoted into your position?”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 17:1-31. *“What is the challenge facing Saul and Israel?”* *“How does David enter the picture?”* Ancient nations often had a warrior-champion as their representative in battle (e.g., Achilles and Hector are Greek and Trojan champions respectively in Homer’s *Iliad*. After some discussion, *“What do you learn about Saul and about David here?”* 1 Sam 17:32-58. *“Describe the discussion between King Saul and shepherd-boy David — overall, in what does each trust or rely?”* Ask about personal application here, *“Do we ever trust in the wrong things, assets, etc.? If so, when/how?”* *“How does this confrontation end?”*

TOPIC — Q-2. *“What were your first few weeks on your current job like?”* *“For early assignments, did your boss give you specific instructions, tools, etc. to do the job? Or, was your tasking more general?”* Bad bosses usually are either giving too many detailed instructions or not enough — They can be either micro-managers or don’t-care-hands-off.

TOPIC — Q-3. *“With your early assignments or tasks at your job, how did you do?”* *“Did you have some successes? — Describe them.”* *“How did your boss respond, especially if he or she is a rather bad boss?”* Remember, as you and the group work through this study, they can discuss and describe past boss situations too. The goal is to relate the biblical texts to workplace topics — the Scriptures to situations — God’s Word to our world.

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As you and the group share prayer requests — praises and petitions about their lives and workplace situations — hopefully this week or next you can encourage several Participants to pray at the end of the session. You might say, after requests are expressed, *“Could two or three of you offer short sentence prayers? Then I will close our prayer time.”* Praying aloud with others does not come easy for most people. It will take awhile and probably require that a few members to do so, before others will grow in their confidence to do so. A group leader note: If you pray a long time and with many wonderful, eloquent phrases, then others may be impressed but they are unlikely to pray aloud themselves.

## **5 Boss Relationship Stressful — Employee Support Needed**      **1 Sam 18:1-19:24**

**TEXT — 1 Sam 18:1-16.** *“What happens to the David-Saul relationship and why?” “Do you think David could have prevented this, or what might he have done once this jealousy situation began to arise?”* We must always show and share that we are loyal to our boss, and that we are not doing anything to undercut or compete with our boss! *“How upset is Saul? How would you describe his personality and emotions?”*

**TOPIC — Q-1.** *“If you have had some success in your workplace assignments, what responses and reactions have you received: (a) from other people, and (b) from your boss?”* After some thorough discussion on that, then ask, *“Do you think your boss has even been jealous or envious of you?”* If so, *why and what can you do to reverse that?”* We may feel some pride in a job well done, but if our supervisor is strained or stressed over that then we have a problem — Are we gloating about it? Do we take all the praise and credit, or are we truly team players and give credit to others — even to the boss, whom we are to be serving anyway?!

**TEXT — 1 Sam 18:17-30.** *“What is Saul’s ploy now, to control or check on David?”* *“Do you in any way, give your boss reason to ‘check on you’?”* We need to be objective and sure that we are not causing or contributing to our boss’s bad attitude and actions toward us — if we are causing irritations and frictions with our boss, we must admit that/them and correct the situation.

**TEXT — 1 Sam 19:1-24.** *“With David’s relationship with Saul strained and even becoming stressful, what does he need now?”* Support. *“From whom does David seek help and support?”* A coworker and colleague. *What answer from the king (and his father) does Jonathan receive? — But what happens shortly thereafter?!”* Saul says David is safe, but later his evil spirit and emotions cause him to throw a spear at David again! *“From whom does David also seek and need support?”* His spouse. *“Who is the third person from whom David seeks support and council?”* The man of God, the prophet-priest Samuel.

**TOPIC — Q-3.** *“Do you have a coworker or colleague, a spouse, and/or a mature Christian (pastor or friend) with whom you can discuss workplace problems — especially if you have a bad boss? If so, can this person hear (truly hear) and help you with your work stress plus keep information confidential?”* We all need a good, honest, and supportive confidante often in our lives. *“Or maybe you have been that person for another worker who is in a stressful boss situation. If so, could you share that with us?”*

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Hopefully, your small group can develop love, care, and trust for each other such that you all can — and will — share in confidence and with confidentiality plus prayer regularly for one another. Remind the group that things shared there, are to be kept confidential.

**6 Good Peer Friendship, Yet More Conflict with Boss****1 Sam 20:1-23:29**

TEXT — 1 Sam 20:1-23. David has fled Saul's presence, but he is still trying to figure out the difficult, stressful relationship with his boss. He seeks out his best friend, Jonathan. *"What does David ask of Jonathan, and what is Jonathan's belief at this point?"* Then ask, *"What is Jonathan's concern? He suggests a plan to check on his father's attitude toward David, and then signal David — what is it?"*

TOPIC — Q-1. *"Do you have a good friend, colleague or coworker, at work with whom you can discuss your boss problem? — Is this person trustworthy and also objective, as well as your friend, to give you good advice?"* After some discussion, ask, *"If you are in a bad boss situation, do you have a colleague who knows your boss well and who might, if necessary, seek out the boss' opinions about you? Would you ever ask this person to do this, or would this not be a good idea? — Let's discuss this."*

TEXT — 1 Sam 20:24-42. *"How does Jonathan's plan progress? — First, with his talk with his father the king?"* Note: Saul is honest with his son about David — What reason does he give Jonathan about why David *"must die"*? Jonathan will never be king, if David lives. Actually, Jonathan seems to know that David may become King (see 20:13-15). *"Second, how does his communication with David go?"*

TOPIC — Q-2. Actually, work through the format of Question 2 as a group for the responses options and their consequences, for someone working under a bad boss. *"What are the various choices an employee has under a bad boss?"* List those. *"Now for each let's talk about the consequence, the 'pros' and 'cons' of each option."* You want to help the small-group participants do this process so they can consider and select, when necessary, the best choice for them as the Lord leads them — or can help a friend or colleague do this if necessary.

TEXT — 1 Sam 21, 22, and 23. Unless time allows reading and discussing some short passages, just summarize how David and his men continue fleeing Saul as they move around areas and yet they have a good reputation with those around them.

TOPIC — Q-3. *"If you cannot quit your job, how might you 'flee' figuratively?"* *"Should we as Christians, however, 'give up on our work'?"* *What are some other attitudes and approaches we might have?"*

## **7 Role Reversal: Ruin Opportunities — Revenge Lesson 1 Sam 24:1-27:12**

These chapters are possibly the core of David's attitude — and certainly his actions — toward Saul. They are great accounts of a human versus a godly approach to revenge, payback, or even “justice” as we might see it. We can learn much from these chapters and this discussion, as we see the employee responding to a “bad boss” employer.

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TEXT — 1 Sam 24:1-22. *“What amazing scene occurs here?!”* This was not a quick stop for Saul, and he probably took off his robe. *“How does David describe Saul here — not once but twice?!”* What does he say to the King in this attempt to dialogue and reason with him? *“To whom does David actually ‘appeal’ for justice in this situation?”* Note this, because in the next chapter we will see a different attitude by David. *“How does Saul reply to David here?”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 25:1-19. *“What is the scene here, and why does David get so upset?”* *“What are his attitude and actions?”* 1 Sam 25:20-35. *“Who intervenes and how?”* *“Do you think Abigail was ‘disobeying’ or ‘not being submissive to’ her husband? — Why or why not?”* *“What is her argument and presentation to David — especially about avenging one’s self as David was about to do?”* 1 Sam 25:36-44. *“After David settles down and Abigail returns home, what happens?”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 26:1-25. *“What occurs in this scene?”* *“Again how does David refer to Saul, three times?!”* *“After David again dialogues with Saul, how does the king reply?”*

TOPIC — Q-1. *“Have you ever had the opportunity to “harm” or “subvert” your boss? If so, explain. What did you do and why?”* We all probably can be subversive in some ways to our supervisor — for example, when we are frequently critical of that person or publicly disagree with the boss’ ideas, comments, policies, etc. We do not have to agree always with our boss — in fact, we probably should not. Nevertheless, to undermine or undercut one’s boss is unprofessional and disloyal. *“Did you ever have a second or third occasion when your comments or actions could have ‘hurt’ your boss? What did you do those times, and why?”*

TOPIC — Q-2. *“Let’s now apply to ourselves the Scripture lessons from Chapter 25. Has someone ever wronged you and made you mad enough to lash back? — Describe and explain what happened.”* Surely, such situations have happened to most of us. Maybe as the Group Leader, you could share a time when you got angry and responded hastily and incorrectly. Q-3. *“What are some possible reactions when we are wronged? What are the consequences to the other person — and to us?”* We should know that when we hate another person, we even more that the other are negatively affected!

Summarize 1 Sam 27, explaining that David still flees Saul into the area of the Philistines where surely Saul would not come just hunting for David. King Achish gives David the

town of Zilag, and then David attacks and raids various enemies of Israel.

**8 Boss' Bizarre Behavior and Employee's Behavior****1 Sam 28:1-30:31**

TEXT: 1 Sam 28:1-25. *“What challenges does Saul now face and what does he do? “What is wrong with this?! — for Saul and for us today?!” “What is Saul told, and how does this affect him?” “How would you describe Saul’s relationship with the Lord God, over the past several chapters?” “Compare Saul’s faith and relationship with the Lord with that of David — and what examples (past chapters and events) might we cite?”*  
 After some discussion about Saul, ask, *“When we don’t seem to get an answer from the Lord, what steps do we take? — Are these biblical or not?!”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 29:1-11. *“What reputation, even outsiders to Israel, did David have?” “What dilemma exists here for Achish? — and also, what dilemma exists for David too?” “How is the situation resolved?”*

TOPIC — Q-2. After some discussion above, apply this issue to yourselves within the small group, *“What do you think others say about us as Christians, our coworkers and those outside the area where we work? — Why? How do our attitudes and actions contribute to our reputation?”*

TEXT — 1 Sam 30:1-20. *“When David and his men return to their home base, Ziklag, what do they discover?” “What happens next?” “Who is this ‘Egyptian’ who shows up and how does David treat him?”* 1 Sam 30:21-31. *“How does David do as a military leader here?” “What post-victory personnel decision must he make (cf. 30:9-10)? — Why do you think he decides this way?”* Notice 30:25 says that David’s decision became policy. Are only the front-line soldiers responsible for a victory? For what purposes are behind-the-line forces?

TOPIC — Q-3. *“Do you see favoritism in your company or department?” If so, what and why do you think it occurs? How might you and others address it?”* After discussion, ask a more personal application question: *“Are you more favorable in actions and/or attitudes toward certain people in your section, unit, company, etc.? Why or why not?”*

## **9 Boss Fails; Employee Reacts — and Becomes Boss**

**1 Sam 31:1-2 Sam 2:7**

In two weeks, you and your group will complete this study. So you should think about what will happen to the group participants after this study is completed. Are there other classes or courses these members could — or even spiritually should — do? Would they want to remain together as a small group and study another topic? — If so, what might you or others suggest?

Do think and pray about the ending of this group study, and how the Lord might lead and grow you all after it is finished.

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TEXT — 1 Sam 31:1-13. *“What is the setting as this chapter begins?” “During the battle, what happens to Saul at first? — How did he respond to his ‘armor-bearer’ and why?” “How did Saul finally die, and who else died that day?”* Recall Samuel’s word to Saul in 1 Sam 28:19. Notice what this says about an after-life? *“What do the victorious Philistines do?” “What happened to the bodies of Saul and his sons?”*

TOPIC — Q-1. *“Has your boss ever failed or ‘fallen’ in some way? If so, what and/or how?” “What were your reactions?” “Be honest — were you glad, very happy, etc.?”* You might share if you were ever happy when an abusive supervisor of yours messed up and got embarrassed — most of us have felt that way about a bad boss at some time.

TEXT — 2 Sam 1-16. *“How does David learn of Saul’s defeat and death?” “What does he think about this reporting messenger? — Why?” “Again, what is the phrase which David uses for Saul?”* 1 Sam 1:17-27. *“What is David’s reaction to Saul’s demise? — Why?”*

TOPIC — Q-2. *“Might we have David’s attitude toward Saul, as we think about and try to relate to our boss? — How can we develop that approach?”* Believing and realizing that the Lord God is sovereign over our being at our specific job and workplace plus over our being under this particular boss, should help us to trust in the Lord in this situation.

TEXT — 1 Sam 2:1-7. *“Notice, now the worker is the boss, the employee is the employer — the follower (even the one who departed) is the king and a boss! What are David’s first actions as the new king, the new boss?”*

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Since the last small group ends in two weeks, you might ask the participants to think and to pray about what they would like to do next — e.g., joining another groups or class, continue together as a small group with a new topic to study, or what?

**10 Your Boss, You, and You as Boss****study review & summary**

This is your last session on the David-Saul relationship.

You will want to focus on and discuss the key lessons learned and applications for the biblical texts 1 Samuel 8 into 2 Samuel 2.

Primarily you are helping the small-group participants review and refresh what they learned from David as he started, then struggled, and then separated from his boss, King Saul — who became a bad, threatening boss.

Yet secondarily, you are also enabling them to see — as hopefully they have throughout the study of David and Saul — that God’s Word is “living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

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TOPICS (& TEXTS). Ask and work through each of the last group discussion questions, one at a time, to review and discuss the key points participants learned and applied from this study and small group.

Ask questions such as: *“What are two or three specific things you learned from the David-Saul relationship and interaction? How did David’s attitude and actions help you with your bad boss situation, or in your reflecting on such a situation?”*



## **[11] Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss various texts & topics**

This will be your last session with your small group.

It is great that you and the other participants have finished the course. Yet at the same time, it will be a little sad because the Bible discussion, life applications, personal sharing, and prayer together develops wonderful fellowship and friendship in Christ. Hopefully, friendships have been deepened and new ones started.

After 40-45 minutes of discussing the biblical texts and the applications principles, you should stop that focus. Then shift to sharing about this small-group experience — the joys and benefits — and talk a little about what the participants would like to do after this study is finished. For example, they could joining another group or class, or they could continue together as a small group with a new topic to study?

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### TEXTS and TOPICS

This week the biblical texts are short, one to three verses a day. They and the daily individual studies center on one topics — which is a key principle for employees in their relationship with their boss.

Allow the group's discussion and interaction to guide the direction more this week with the passages and principles.

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There will probably not be enough time to pass out the evaluation and critique sheets, so given them out with return addressed and postage paid envelopes. Ask the participants to fill-out these sheets anonymously, to give you as group leader good feedback for improving your leadership and the course curriculum. Mail-out these sheets to those participants who were not there on the last session meeting.

Do thank the participants for (1) their strong commitment and involvement with this 10-unit curriculum, (2) their sharing and insights about having God's perspective on their/own workplaces and bosses, and (3) their wonderful friendship and fellowship you have developed with them during this study.

Take prayer requests and have five minutes or so to pray together — thanking the Lord for this wonderful small group and for learning, discussing, and growing together spiritually through the study of God's Word.

## APPENDIX D

**“Working for a Difficult Boss;  
Studies in David and King Saul Employee-Employer Relationship”**

Group Leader: Bill Weimer

**Pre-Study: Expectations — Participants’ Feedback**

**Expectations**

(1) I came to this class because . . .

- I enjoy learning all I can about the Bible and what it means
- I love Jesus and my church family — I want to learn more . . .
- I haven’t been able to attend Bible studies recently as I have been teaching
- Teacher sounds knowledgeable and interesting
- You were teaching
- I always attend Sunday school
- A change & interest in subject — and to getting to know the pastor
- To learn more . . .
- I’m always open to new learning experiences
- I’m here — I didn’t know this class was happening starting this Sunday
- I was confused about what class was being held

(2) I would like to learn more . . .

	<b>No / Not Desired</b>	<b>Some Desired</b>	<b>Bit More Desired</b>	<b>Strongly Prefer / Desire</b>
(a) insights about my work situations				
	1	2	3	4
	x	xxx	(2.66) xxx	xx
(b) about my boss (or bosses in general)				
	1	2	3	4
	x	xxx	(2.66) xxx	xx
(c) about myself as a boss				
	1	2	3	4
		x	xxxxxx (3.27)	xxxx
(d) Biblical “boss-worker” situations and principles				
	1	2	3	4
		x	xxxx (3.45)	xxxxxx

(3) Other comments about this topic and class as it starts . . .

**Opening Discussion**

(a) Where do you now work, or what are the organizations with which you interact?

- Norfolk Technical Center — Child Nutrition
- Church Committees, PTA
- DePaul Medical Center — Maryview Medical Center, Mary Immaculate
- Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers (MOPS) & Norfolk School System Mentor
- Now retired, but previously worked for Presbytery Staff & also Civic League
- Homemaker
- Dr. James Meares
- Virginia Beach City Schools, Pembroke Meadows

(b) Have you worked for “a difficult boss” on in a “difficult work” (past or present)?

- Past
- Yes
- Absolutely — Present and don’t know how to deal with it!
- Yes — Past
- Yes (unorganized & unrealistic)
- Yes
- Somewhat
- Yes — U.S. Navy
- No
- Yes

## APPENDIX E

### “Working for a Difficult Boss; Studies in David and King Saul Employee-Employer Relationship”

Group Leader: Bill Weimer

#### **Pre-Study: Your Most Difficult Boss — Participants’ Feedback**

##### **Your Bad or Poor Boss**

(1) As a employee, worker, etc., describe your “most difficult boss” situation . . .

- I felt as if everything I did was wrong
- Changing the system
- My current boss, a doctor, doesn’t know anything about what we’re supposed to do . . .
- Working for someone who is not capable of leading due to illness
- I really haven’t worked with anyone too difficult
- I work for someone in a setting requiring a generous spirit and the ability to prioritize but she is unable to be that kind of person!
- Disorganized director

(a) What behaviors made this boss difficult, hard or harsh?

- Not sure what sets her off . . .
- Superior attitude & micro-manager
- No guidelines — No corrections — Too much work
- He listens to whomever he feels their advice sounds good — flavor of the day!
- His health situation
- I just don’t care for leaders who are dictators
- Totally self-absorbed
- Not respectful of personnel — demand respect but would not give it — Micro-manager
- Could not keep order or express what they wanted done
- Attitude

(b) What attitudes made this boss difficult, hard, or harsh?

- Voicing my opinion
- Listening to our ideas
- My way or the highway
- Unable to be empathetic
- Give responsibility but not authority to get work done
- Did not want help
- Inability to see anyone else’s opinion — not flexible

(c) What different behaviors and/or attitudes would you have liked or ones which would have motivated you much better in your job and workplace?

- More positive feedback
- Understanding
- Freedom to do my job — trust, confidence, open communications
- Listen to what others have to say — doesn't necessarily have to use the info, just listen!
- Shared responsibilities, honesty, two-way communication
- Respect both ways — ability or desire to compromise
- Willingness to listen and accept ideas

### **You as "Boss"**

(2) For you as "boss" supervisor, leader, or even a parent, what is most difficult in your . . .

- Getting those "under" me to listen to me
- I expect perfection
- Confrontation
- Trying to not be too heavy-handed
- Organization & patience

(a) Attitude(s)?

- Being "right"
- Letting the unimportant things go
- To have an attitude where your opinion is always right
- When people can't remember why they are there
- Accepting criticism
- More flexibility

(b) Behavior(s)?

- Maybe not 100% control
- Emotional
- Deceit
- Close minded
- When people do not carry their share of responsibility
- Not listening, but debating
- Being more tactful

(3) What most, the role or position as “boss,” would you like to change about yourself?

- Patience
- Accept weaknesses in others
- Less emotional — taking things personally. . . [ be ] more objective!
- Not to let my emotions get in the way of my job
- When people have very strong opinions — to understand and to keep mind open to why they have the feelings they have
- Better able to delegate
- More patience — less accusatory

**APPENDIX F****David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship:  
Exploring Biblical Principles for Those Working under a Bad Boss****Pre-Study Evaluation — David and Saul****Multiple Choice Questions:**

- (1) God gave Israel a king because . . .
  - (a) the Israelites needed a leader.
  - (b) other nations had kings.
  - (c) there had not been any good or great leaders of Israel since Moses.
  - (d) all of the above
  - (e) none of the above
- (2) Saul became King of Israel because . . .
  - (a) he was the one in the “leadership line” to step up and to succeed Samuel.
  - (b) he was a man after God’s heart.
  - (c) he was from a poor family so God wanted to give him a leadership opportunity.
  - (d) Samuel wanted him to become King but God did not but the Lord consented.
  - (e) all of the above
  - (f) none of the above
- (3) As the first King of Israel, Saul started . . .
  - (a) strongly and showed great leadership promise.
  - (b) poorly, making mistakes from the beginning.
  - (c) well but began showing irregular leadership behavior.
  - (d) never having to admit to any mistakes.
  - (e) both (a) and (c) above
- (4) David was employed under King Saul because . . .
  - (a) he was next in line to inherit the throne from Saul’s family.
  - (b) he showed potential, though he did not have success as a young man.
  - (c) he had skills that Saul’s staff needed in the palace but not outside the palace.
  - (d) Saul personally knew him and hired him.
  - (e) none of the above
- (5) David’s strain and stress with Saul was because . . .
  - (a) other people thought David did not perform his job roles well at the start.
  - (b) David was disloyal to Saul and tried to “dis” or to undermine him.
  - (c) David, as a new hire, was slow to act and was withdrawn from his boss.
  - (d) Saul felt threatened by David.
  - (e) staff members were jealous of David.
  - (f) none of the above

- (6) David needed and sought support, both professional and personal . . .
- (a) outside Saul's organization.
  - (b) from some people who were not close to King Saul.
  - (c) through many conversations with other staff members and employees.
  - (d) by staying in the administration but by becoming a recluse.
  - (e) by resigning Saul's organization and no longer supporting Israel.
  - (f) by leaving Saul's presence and trying to eliminate their interactions.
- (7) As an worker and staff member under Saul's kingship, David . . .
- (a) wanted to bring Saul down and take over as King of Israel.
  - (b) would have brought Saul down, but he never had the opportunity.
  - (c) struggled with the temptation for revenge.
  - (d) sought to honor Saul as his senior.
  - (e) both (c) and (d)
- (8) When Saul fell, David . . .
- (a) was vindicated and happy because of Saul's erratic behavior toward him, and because now, for Saul, "What goes around, comes around!"
  - (b) was excited because now he would become king.
  - (c) was sad as he saw Saul as "*God's anointed*" in his organizational position.
  - (d) rewarded a man knowledgeable about (and possibly supporting) Saul's demise.
  - (e) all of the above
  - (f) none of the above
- (9) David, during his stressful relationship with his boss King Saul...
- (a) always acted honestly and openly with everyone.
  - (b) did nothing really which might have concerned Saul as King.
  - (c) did not struggle or worry about his treatment by Saul, but just trusted God.
  - (d) later tried to discuss with Saul the strain or stress in their relationship.
  - (e) all of the above
  - (f) none of the above
- (10) David as an employee . . .
- (a) talked critically and cynically with other people about his boss.
  - (b) never sought advice or help with his stressful relationship with Saul.
  - (c) just remained on the job and took the criticism, the threats, etc. from his boss.
  - (d) only received bad behavior and critical attitudes from King Saul.
  - (e) viewed his boss — and himself as an staff employee — from God's perspective.

### True or False Questions:

- (11) T F David's brothers were critical of him, thinking he was conceited and cocky.
- (12) T F Understanding Saul's ascent and start as king might have helped David.
- (13) T F Jonathan, Saul's son, had a loyalty dilemma: his father or his good friend?!
- (14) T F David's wife Abigail gave him wise advice about his actions before God.



(15) T F David truly grieved when Saul fell, as Saul was God's leader for His people.

## APPENDIX G

### David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship: Exploring Biblical Principles for Those Working under a Bad Boss

#### **Pre-Study Evaluation — Your Organization, Your Boss, and You**

This “evaluation” will help you — and our group participants — study and learn about our organization or company workplace and our relationship with our boss. Please do this “evaluation” based upon (1) your work situation (even if you are a volunteer) or (2) on a one in which you worked under a “bad boss.”

Circle your answer for numerical choices; for others, write out short answers.

#### **Your Organization / Company:**

(1) How much knowledge do you have on the background, history, and development of . . .

(a) your organization?

almost none	little	some	a lot
1	2	3	4

(b) your boss?

almost none	little	some	a lot
1	2	3	4

#### **Your Boss:**

(2) How was your boss selected, hired, or developed into his/her position?

(3) How would you describe your boss’ style of . . .

(a) Leadership (i.e., behaving and relating with people, especially employees)?

(b) Thinking (i.e., processing information and planning ideas, concepts, etc.)?

(4) Based upon your observation and/or others' comments, what are your boss'

(a) Strengths?

(b) Weaknesses?

(5) When your boss started at the company, do you know anything about his/her . . .

(a) Successes (e.g., accomplishments, achievements, etc.)?

(b) Failures (e.g., things that did not go well, etc.)?

**You as an Employee:**

(6) How were you selected and hired or developed into your position?

(7) How would you describe your . . .

(a) Leadership style (behaving and relating with employees)?

(b) Thinking style (processing information, ideas, concepts, etc.)?

(c) Expectations as an employee?

(8) What are your . . .

(a) Strengths?

(b) Weaknesses?

**You and Your Boss:**

(9) When you first started working at the company, did you have any . . .

(a) Successes (e.g., accomplishments) or Failures (e.g., poor performances)?

(b) Expectations, especially of your boss? — If so, what were these?

(10) To any of your “successes” or accomplishments/achievements as you started . . .

(a) How did your boss react? Why do you think this was the reaction(s)?

(b) How might you have responded to your boss’ reactions? Might you have done anything differently, in relationship to your boss at that time? — If so, what?

(11) If your relationship with your boss is “bad” . . .

(a) How is this strain and stress manifested?

(b) Do you have anyone to support you concerning this stress? Who and how?

(c ) What response options to your “bad” (difficult) boss . . .

(i) do you have?

(ii) what are the pros and cons of each option?

(iii) which one(s) are or will be your strategy, with your boss? Why?

(12) Since you have been working for him/her,

(a) has he/she failed, and if so in what ways?

(b) at such times, what were your thoughts and response(s) — and why?

## APPENDIX H

### WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS:

**General Prep for David-Saul Study:**  
**“Employee-Employer Developmental Relationship —**  
**Six Phases”**

**(1) START** (interview, hiring, promotion, and beginning)

Your Company — History / Development

Your Boss

Background & Hire / Put in Position

Style

Strengths & Weaknesses

Expectations

**(2) SUCCESS** (early achievements after Start)

Your Boss = Employer

Successes (any?)

“Failures” (any?)

You = Employee

Background & Hire / Put in Position

Style

Strengths & Weaknesses

Expectations

Successes (any?) — at beginning & boss’ reactions

“Failures” (any?) — real and/or perceived by boss

(3) **STRESS** (from some strains to increasing problems and tension = bad boss?)

Difficulties & Causes

Employee needs to analyze and understand:

- Your Organization
- Your Boss
- Yourself as Employee
- Your Relationship with Your Boss

(4) **SUPPORT** (need for and importance of having a wise, objective confidante)

Spouse

Colleague / Coworker

Mentor (workplace experience)

Older Christian (e.g., business person, pastor, etc.)

(5) **SELECTION** (response options to consider):

- Defeated (comply — passive)
- Defiant (confront — aggressive; even legal action)
- Dialogue (consult & talk — engage to improve relationship)
- Departure (quit — exit)

(6) **SUCCESSOR** (if you stay or if you go to new job or workplace, a change for you)

Boss exits/moves — You emerge as boss or a boss (in a leadership role)

Lessons Learned (any? — from having been employee under a bad boss)

Re-**START** (cycle) developmental phases again (top above)

## APPENDIX I

### **WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS:** **Exploring Biblical Principles and Practical Applications from** **The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship through Developmental Phases**

#### **Class Schedule & Topics (Eleven Sessions)**

DATES:TOPICS & THEMES:TEXTS:

Jul 1	Introduction and Methodology of David-Saul Study Pre-Study Evals: Your Organization, Your Boss & You; David and Saul Participants' Study Guide	[weekly read ahead below texts]
	<u><b>START</b> — <i>What was the development of your organization and of your boss?</i></u>	
Jul 8	<i>Start: Organization and Boss — History and Background</i>	1 Sam 8:1-12:25
	<u><b>SUCCESS</b> — <i>Did your boss and you have early successes?</i></u>	
Jul 15	<i>Success: Boss' Early Success and Failures — Then Rebuke</i>	1 Sam 13:1-15:35
Jul 22	<i>Success: Employee Identified, Hired, and Successful</i>	1 Sam 16:1-17:58
	<u><b>STRESS &amp; SUPPORT</b> — <i>Who can support you as stress with boss increases?</i></u>	
Jul 29	<i>Stress: Relations with Boss Stressful — Support Needed</i>	1 Sam 18:1-19:24
Aug 5	<i>Support: Peer Friendship, yet More Conflict with Boss</i>	1 Sam 20:1-23:29
	<u><b>SELECTION</b> — <i>What response options do you have with your boss?</i></u>	
Aug 12	<i>Selection: Ruin Opportunities — Role Reversal Lesson</i>	1 Sam 24:1-27:12
Aug 19	<i>Selection: Boss' Bizarre Behavior &amp; Employee's Behavior</i>	1 Sam 28:1-30:31
	<u><b>SUCCESSOR</b> — <i>How do react if your boss fails or falls?</i></u>	
Aug 26	<i>Successor: Boss Fails; Employee Reacts &amp; Becomes Boss</i>	1 Sam 31:1-2 Sam 2:7
Sep 2	Review: Your Boss, You, & You as Boss	(David-Saul study review)
Sep 9	Principles for Christian Employees with Their Boss	(various texts)

## APPENDIX J

### **WORKING UNDER A BAD BOSS: Exploring Biblical Principles and Practical Applications from The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship Through Developmental Phases**

#### **Weekly Topics and Scripture Texts**

*Readings are in 1 and 2 Samuel — until Session #11  
(number of verses covered is given in parentheses)*

#### **July 1 — INTRODUCTION**

Welcome & Introductions (Leader and Participants)  
Course Purpose  
Pre-Study Evaluation: Your Organization, Your Boss, and You  
Pre-Study Evaluation: David and Saul  
Course Methodology  
Course Overview  
Participant's Guide — Introduction to next week's topics and texts

#### **July 8 — Group Discussion**

##### **START: ORGANIZATION & LEADER — HISTORY & BACKGROUND**

1	8:1-22	Organization's History and Development	(23)
2	9:1-13	Leader's History and Background	(14)
3	9:14-10:8	Leader Identified, Interviewed, and Hired	(22)
4	10:9-11:15	Leader Installed	(33)
5	12:1-25	Older Leader Retires — Reflects on the Organization	(25)

#### **July 15 — Group Discussion**

##### **SUCCESS: LEADER'S EARLY SUCCESS & FAILURES — THEN REBUKE**

1	13:1-15	Leader's Early Success, then Failure	(15)
2	13:16-14:23	Leadership Resources and Tactics	(30)
3	14:24-52	Poor Leadership Under Stress and Consequences	(28)
4	15:1-15	Leader's New Challenge and Task	(15)
5	15:16-35	Leader's Disobedience (Dishonor?), then Rejection	(20)



**July 22** — Group Discussion**SUCCESS: EMPLOYEE IDENTIFIED, HIRED, AND SUCCESSFUL**

1	16:1-13	New Employee Identified/Selected by/to Work for the Lord	(13)
2	16:14-23	New Employee Identified/Selected by (to Work for) the Leader	(10)
3	17:1-11	A Serious Leadership Challenge	(11)
4	17:12-37	New Employee Steps Forward as a Leader	(15)
5	17:38-58	Different Leaders and Different Resources — Results/Success	(20)

**July 29** — Group Discussion**STRESS: RELATIONS WITH BOSS STRESSFUL — SUPPORT NEEDED**

1	18:1-16	Leader-Employee — Stress, Rivalry, Jealousy; Relation Changes	(16)
2	18:17-30	Leader-Employee Relationship Complexities	(14)
3	19:1-10	Employee's Support — A Work Colleague	(10)
4	19:11-17	Employee's Support — Spouse (or Good Friend)	(9)
5	19:18-24	Employee's Support — Old Counselor and the Lord	(9)

**August 5** — Group Discussion**SUPPORT: PEER FRIENDSHIP, YET MORE CONFLICT WITH BOSS**

1	20:1-23	A Work Colleague's Friendship	(23)
2	20:24-43	Coworker's Advocacy for Employee to Leader	(20)
3	21:1-15	Employee Flees the Leader	(15)
4	22:1-23	Employee's Reputation among Others	(23)
5	23:1-29	Employee's Performance, Even Under Stress	(30)

**August 12** — Group Discussion**SELECTION: RUIN OPPORTUNITIES — ROLE REVERSAL LESSON**

1	24:1-22	Employee has Opportunity to Harm Leader	(22)
2	25:1-22	Employee Seeks Revenge and Payback	(22)
3	25:23-44	Employee's Lesson about Revenge from God's Perspective	(20)
4	26:1-25	Employee Has 2 <sup>nd</sup> Opportunity to Harm Leader	(25)
5	27:1-12	Employee Fears and Flees Leader	(13)

**August 19** — Group Discussion**SELECTION: BOSS' BIZZARE BEHAVIOR & EMPLOYEE'S BEHAVIOR**

- |   |          |   |      |
|---|----------|---|------|
| 1 | 28:1-14  | Under Stress, Leader Reacts and Seeks Help                  | (14) |
| 2 | 28:15-28 | Leader Learns What? — Again                                 | (14) |
| 3 | 29:1-11  | Among Strangers, What is Said about Employee                | (12) |
| 4 | 30:1-15  | Under Stress, Employee Reacts and Leads Against Adversaries | (16) |
| 5 | 30:16-31 | How Does Employee Treat and Lead Personnel                  | (16) |

**August 26** — Group Discussion**SUCCESSOR: BOSS FAILS; EMPLOYEE REACTS & BECOMES BOSS**

- |   |         |   |      |
|---|---------|---|------|
| 1   | 31:1-13 | Leader/Boss Fails and Falls                   | (14) |
| <i>[Scripture readings are now in 2 Samuel]</i> |         |   |      |
| 2   | 1:1-10  | Employee Seeks Info about Leader              | (11) |
| 3   | 1:11-16 | Employee Executes Justice on Behalf of Leader | (6)  |
| 4   | 1:17-27 | Employee Laments in Song over Leader          | (11) |
| 5   | 2:1-7   | Employee Becomes the Leader — the Boss        | (8)  |

**September 2** — Group Discussion: Review of David-Saul Study**REVIEW: YOUR BOSS, YOU, & YOU AS BOSS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | You and Your Boss/Leader — Relationship . . . Followership!  |
| 2 | Your Boss — Perspectives . . . about Your Boss and from God! |
| 3 | You as Boss/Leader — Leadership . . . Your Turn!             |
|   | Post-Study Evaluation: Your Organization, Your Boss, and You |
|   | Post-Study Evaluation: David and Saul                        |

**September 9** — Group Discussion**WORKPLACE PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIANS WITH THEIR BOSS**

- |   |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Psalm 123:2     | Seek God's Mercy for Your Workplace Situation                   |
| 2 | 1 Peter 2:18-21 | Submit with Respect to Your Boss                                |
| 3 | Colossians 3:22 | Have a Sincere Heart Obeying Your Boss as You Would Christ      |
| 4 | Ephesians 6:6   | Seen or Unseen Obey and Work for Your Boss                      |
| 5 | Ephesians 6:7   | Serving Wholeheartedly Your Boss as If You are Serving the Lord |
| 6 | Ephesians 6:9   | Serve Your Masters: Earthly and Heavenly                        |

## APPENDIX K

206 Oak Grove Road  
Norfolk, VA 23505  
August 26, 2007

**SUBJ: Help with My Doctor of Ministry (DMin) — Evaluating Our S.S. Class**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

First, I thank you very much for your participation in our class. Eathel and I loved the class interaction and we learned a lot, from our discussing the David-Saul story and from your sharing about your life and workplace situations. This class, really a small-group Bible study and fellowship group, was a wonderful experience for us with each of you at Third Presbyterian Church Norfolk. We hope it was a good experience for you.

Second, I need your help quickly please. I am trying to finish my DMin degree just as your Pastor, Phil, did recently. To do so, I need BY THIS THURSDAY, Aug 30, evaluations from you about our class study and discussion — “anonymously” of course!

Enclosed are (1) several pages of evaluations and (2) a self-addressed envelope with postage. You didn't know you'd get a “3-part take-home test” did you?! ☺ I seek your assistance for 15 minutes, to complete my DMin thesis-project with this evaluation. This will be a great help with my degree — and whenever I can lead this course again!

**Could please TODAY fill-out these sheets and mail them right back to me!**

I need your feedback by Thursday because on Friday all my/our books will be packed-out, as we sold our house and must be out by this Friday “close of business”!

Thank you very much for your quick assistance, comments, and recommendations (a) about the good and (b) about the how-to-improve this study material and class format. Even more, I thank you for your friendship as Eathel and I got to know each of you, for your encouragement and support to me as your Temporary Supply Pastor, and for your faith and service in Jesus Christ at Third Presbyterian Church Norfolk.

It has been a joy to know and fellowship with you each of you in our S.S. Class!

May the Lord Jesus Christ continue to bless you, to grow you, and to use you within the congregation, at your workplace, and throughout the Norfolk community!

**With deep thanks and love for you in Christ!!**

Bill (& Eathel) Weimer

## APPENDIX L

**THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**S.S. Class Taught by Bill Weimer — Summer 2007**

**The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship:**  
**Exploring Biblical Principles for Those Working under a Bad Boss**

**Post-Study Evaluation — Participants (Course, Materials, & Leadership;**  
**David & Saul; and Your Organization, Your Boss, & You**

\* NOTE: Participant (11) feedback is below in “quotes”

Please (1) circle your assessment and (2) give any comment (pro or con, things you like about this course study and things you recommend be modified for improvement)

**(1) COURSE — How did you like and use the principles of this course?**

The Course Topic — David-Saul Relationship and Working Under a Bad Boss
---

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

x

xxxxx (3.2)    xxxx

Comments:

- “I loved our study and I can understand David and Saul much better now, as I think of them in terms of working under a bad boss.”
- “Lots of helpful information about personalities, leadership principles and the need to be absolutely honest even when we’re wrong.”
- “I didn’t have a boss this summer, so I didn’t apply the principles. But I will try to recall what I learned in class as I teach this fall.”
- “I was lucky never to have had a bad boss — had a couple who weren’t too “bright.”
- “Everyone will work for someone sometime.”
- “I thoroughly enjoyed your classes, even though I could not attend them all.”

Small-Group Discussion Format
-------------------------------

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

xxx (3.36)    xxxxxxxx

Comments:

- “Pastor Bill made our study so much fun and helped the Old Testament Book come alive and related it to today in everyday relationships.”
- “Enjoyed hearing and learning from experiences of classmates.”
- “Sharing is always good.”
- “The discussion was always great, and you clearly helped everyone participate.”
- “Open discussion showed different types of bosses and what could be done to help [employees’] situations.”

Purpose #1 — Examine Bible principles in the David-Saul employee-boss relationship
--

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable
		xxxxx	(3.5) xxxxx

Comments:

- “This study is very relevant in our lives today — not only in employer-boss relationships, but with difficult persons in your life.”
- “We have all been in both positions. Leadership skills can be learned but an obedient heart comes from an authentic relationship with our Lord.”
- “I have never looked at Saul as a boss, thus this experience was a good one.”
- “This was a whole new concept for me in studying Scripture — we all learned a lot.”
- “Showed we have different types of bosses & different situations arise.”

Purpose #2 — Explore Bible applications for our workplaces and bad boss relations
---

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable
	x	xxx	(3.5) xxxxxx

Comments:

- “We see how David’s patience with Saul was an example for us to have faith in the Lord to show us how to relate to people giving us a hard time. “
- “Sometimes we forget that our bosses are human and fallible. It is good to be reminded that David trusted God.”
- “Showed how human relationships have not changed through the years.”

**(2) MATERIALS — How useful were the materials and topics?****The “Participant’s Study Guide”**

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable
		xxx	(3.7) xxxxxxxx

Comments:

- “Our workbook made it so easy to follow and exciting to do our weekly lessons. I didn’t want to miss a class.”
- “Enjoyed using the study guide for my Quiet Time.”
- “I really enjoyed the study guide we had to use at home.”
- “Excellent, but I confess that I didn’t get to all of the daily readings.”

**Biblical Texts, Questions, and Study Themes/Topics**

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable
		xxxxx	(3.44) xxxx

Comments:

- “I enjoyed the classmates sharing their stories about times of stress with bad bosses and how they handled those times.”
- “Answering questions helps me to think about what I have read.”

**Topics and Discussion for Workplace Applications**

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable
	x	xxxxx	(3.44) xxx

Comments:

- “Lots of good input from teacher and classmates to be used in my life with people who maybe hard to get along with.”
- “I am the boss of my students. After taking this class, I will try to be a good boss.”
- “I never had a bad boss, but it was interesting how others handled their situations.”

### (3) **LEADERSHIP** — How well was the study conducted by the Group Leader?

#### Discussion Format and Interaction

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

x (3.9) xxxxxxxx

Comments:

- “Bill couldn’t have done a better job. His leadership is outstanding. I give him A+ ☺”
- “Leader asked stimulating questions and encouraged everyone to participate by really listening to their comments.”
- “Pastor Bill let people tell their experiences and ask questions.”
- “Everyone stayed so focused on the relationship between Saul & David.”
- “A great teacher!”

#### Study and Application of Biblical Texts

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

xxxx (3.6) xxxxxx

Comments:

- “He always went back to the Scripture for insight into the lives of David and Saul plus what was happening with them and how they came to their decisions.”
- “Reading text aloud was so good with this group — hard to stop reading for some of us.”

#### Personal Sharing and Praying for Each Other

1	2	3	4
not relevant nor applicable	somewhat relevant and applicable	good relevance and applicability	very relevant and applicable

xxx (3.7) xxxxxxxx

Comments:

- “We always had prayer and were encouraged to pray for each other through the week.”
- “If we had had more time, it would have been nice to pray for each other more.”
- “We got to know each other during lessons; Bill, you were so insightful in your prayers.”

### **Final Comments or Other Recommendations?**

- “Bill’s ‘Participant’s Study Guide’ was very well prepared. At the time I started his study, I was experiencing a similar bad boss situation. I was able to relate to this study — maybe too much, as a few weeks into the study, it became too depressing! I am not sure if my faith or will is as strong as David’s . . . but God is protecting me like he did David, — this I’m sure. Bill is a very good teacher and his teaching style is very accommodating compared to others who try to make a class feel like you are in a theology class!

- “We have had the privilege to have Pastor Bill Weimer as our pastor, teacher and friend, but too short of a time. We wish he could stay with us always. His compassion, caring, and loving attitude toward everyone has been good for us as a Church and as members of Christ’s Body. We pray for him and send our love with him wherever God sends him and his family.”

- “Bill, I am really tired — Today was the first day of school classes, so my responses may not be what you hoped for. But this Bible study was worthwhile and thought-provoking.”

- “I’m sorry this is coming to an end — I pray that you will stay in a pastoral position where your gift of preaching and teaching will be used to God’s glory.”

- “Group study was very good. Everyone opened up and this showed that Bill Weimer was listener and a great teacher. He showed the love and compassion of Jesus Christ through his actions.”

- “An interesting and a very informative program. Bill Weimer is welcomed to remain at this church indefinitely — Unfortunately for us, that is not possible. We all wish him well in his future endeavors.”

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### **The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship: Exploring Biblical Principles for Those Working under a Bad Boss**

#### **Pre- / Post-Study Evaluation — David and Saul**

*\* NOTE: Participant Pre-Study then Post-Study choices italicized in two columns*  
Correct answers are in **bold**

#### **Multiple Choice Questions:**

- (1) God gave Israel a king because . . .  
 2 2 (a) the Israelites needed a leader.  
 2 1 (b) other nations had kings.  
 1 (c) there had not been any good or great leaders of Israel since Moses.  
 3 (d) all of the above



4 6 (E) none of the above

(2) Saul became King of Israel because . . .

3 (a) he was the one in the “leadership line” to step up and to succeed Samuel.

4 1 (b) he was a man after God’s heart.

(c) he was from a poor family so God wanted to give him a leadership opportunity.

1 3 (d) Samuel wanted him to become King but God did not but the Lord consented.

1 (e) all of the above

1 6 (F) none of the above

(3) As the first King of Israel, Saul started . . .

4 1 (a) strongly and showed great leadership promise.

(b) poorly, making mistakes from the beginning.

1 3 (c) well but began showing irregular leadership behavior.

1 (d) never having to admit to any mistakes.

7 6 (E) both (a) and (c) above

(4) David was employed under King Saul because . . .

3 (a) he was next in line to inherit the throne from Saul’s family.

2 (b) he showed potential, though he did not have success as a young man.

1 1 (c) he had skills that Saul’s staff needed in the palace but not outside the palace.

2 2 (d) Saul personally knew him and hired him.

4 7 (E) none of the above

(5) David’s strain and stress with Saul was because . . .

(a) other people thought David did not perform his job roles well at the start.

1 (b) David was disloyal to Saul and tried to “dis” or to undermine him.

(c) David, as a new hire, was slow to act and was withdrawn from his boss.

7 10 (D) Saul felt threatened by David.

1 (e) staff members were jealous of David.

1 (f) none of the above

(6) David needed and sought support, both professional and personal . . .

3 3 (a) outside Saul’s organization.

2 1 (b) from some people who were not close to King Saul.

3 (c) through many conversations with other staff members and employees.

(d) by staying in the administration but by becoming a recluse.

(e) by resigning Saul’s organization and no longer supporting Israel.

3 6 (F) by leaving Saul’s presence and trying to eliminate their interactions.

(7) As an worker and staff member under Saul’s kingship, David . . .

(a) wanted to bring Saul down and take over as King of Israel.

(b) would have brought Saul down, but he never had the opportunity.

(c) struggled with the temptation for revenge.

8 5 (d) sought to honor Saul as his senior.

3 5 (E) both (c) and (d)

(8) When Saul fell, David . . .

- (a) was vindicated and happy because of Saul's erratic behavior toward him, and because now, for Saul, "What goes around, comes around!"
- 1 (b) was excited because now he would become king.
- 6 7 (C) was sad as he saw Saul as "*God's anointed*" in his organizational position.
- 3 2 (d) rewarded a man knowledgeable about (and possibly supporting) Saul's demise.
- 1 1 (e) all of the above
- (f) none of the above

(9) David, during his stressful relationship with his boss King Saul...

- 1 1 (a) always acted honestly and openly with everyone.
- (b) did nothing really which might have concerned Saul as King.
- 3 1 (c) did not struggle or worry about his treatment by Saul, but just trusted God.
- 6 5 (D) later tried to discuss with Saul the strain or stress in their relationship.
- 2 3 (e) all of the above
- (f) none of the above

(10) David as an employee . . .

- (a) talked critically and cynically with other people about his boss.
- 1 (b) never sought advice or help with his stressful relationship with Saul.
- 4 (c) just remained on the job and took the criticism, the threats, etc. from his boss.
- 1 2 (d) only received bad behavior and critical attitudes from King Saul.
- 5 8 (E) viewed his boss — and himself as a staff employee — from God's perspective.

#### True or False Questions:

- (11) T f David's brothers were critical of him, thinking he was conceited and cocky.  
7-3 9-1
- (12) T f Understanding Saul's ascent and start as king might have helped David.  
9-1 9-1
- (13) T f Jonathan, Saul's son, had a loyalty dilemma: his father or his good friend?!  
8-1 9-0
- (14) t F David's wife Abigail gave him wise advice about his actions before God.  
9-1 7-3
- (15) T f David truly grieved when Saul fell, for Saul was God's leader for His people.  
9-1 9-1

-----

**The David-Saul Employee-Employer Relationship:  
Exploring Biblical Principles for Those Working under a Bad Boss**

**Pre- / Post-Study Evaluation — Your Organization, Your Boss, and You**

This “evaluation” will help you — and our group participants — study and learn about our organization or company workplace and our relationship with our boss. Please do this “evaluation” based upon (1) your work situation (even if you are a volunteer) or (2) on a one in which you worked under a “bad boss.”

Circle your answer for numerical choices; for others, write out short answers.

**Your Organization / Company:**

(1) How much knowledge do you have on the background, history, and development of...

(a) your organization?

almost none	little	some	a lot
1	2	3	4
		xxxxxx	(3.9) xxx

(b) your boss?

almost none	little	some	a lot
1	2	3	4
	xxx	(2.66) xxxxx	x

**Your Boss:**

(2) How was your boss selected, hired, or developed into his/her position?

- “He knew somebody.”
- “Was born into family which had a family-owned company.”
- “Rose through the ranks.”
- “Promoted from within.”
- “Selected by a committee.”
- “Was selected through interview with other participants [candidates] for position.”
- “By action of Board of Directors (BOD) and previous financial experience.”
- “By experience.”
- “College and interview.”

(3) How would you describe your boss' style of . . .

(a) Leadership (i.e., behaving and relating with people, especially employees)?

- "Kind but firm — expected you to perform to your best ability."
- "Clear, trusting, encouraging."
- "Superior, thoughtful, considerate."
- "Fair, concerned about personal lives."
- "Poor."
- "Relates well with all employees — from volunteers, employees, and superiors."
- "Terrible — nearly nonexistent knowledge how to work with people."
- "By close contact and knowing what is going on."
- "Leads by example."

(b) Thinking (i.e., processing information and planning ideas, concepts, etc.)?

- "Always for the best for company and employees."
- "Excellent — very smart."
- "Well-organized, considerate."
- "Very good at planning, but not always good at follow through."
- "Not clear."
- "Overall, a well-adjusted person with wide knowledge of position held."
- "A decent organizer — A terrible administrator."
- "By talking with your boss and knowing what the boss is thinking."

(4) Based upon your observation and/or others' comments, what are your boss'

(a) Strengths?

- "Respects his employees; fair; honest."
- "Sees the big picture; knows his job; clear with people."
- "Organizational concern."
- "Very knowledgeable. Great at seeing the overall picture."
- "Good at acquiring material goods needed for job."
- "Works well with all types of professions."
- "Organization."
- "Being honest."
- "Knowledge."

## (b) Weaknesses?

- "Sometimes overlooks things that really could use extra attention."
- "Messy."
- "I haven't noticed any."
- "Sometimes let his own personal life interfere with his responsibilities."
- "Never being willing to stand up for employees."
- "Really doesn't have any."
- "Not a 'people person.' "
- "Too nice."

(5) When your boss started at the company, do you know anything about his/her . . .

## (a) Successes (e.g., accomplishments, achievements, etc.)?

- "[this was] His first real job, as he was born into a family-owned business."
- "No."
- "No."
- "Not personally, but from other reports."
- "Had Doctorate."
- "None."
- "None, except he manages a financial company in Texas."
- "No."
- "Worked at hospital as dietician."

## (b) Failures (e.g., things that did not go well, etc.)?

- "He hasn't had time to fail."
- "No."
- "No."
- "No, but later found out that he had had difficulty as a youngster with his father."
- "Always controversy whenever she . . . [ ? ] found ? . . . dissatisfaction."
- "None."
- "Alienated most female employees soon after arrival. Alienated me by destroying my company loyalty."
- "None."

### **You as an Employee:**

(6) How were you selected, hired, or developed into your position?

- "I was asked to work for the company, as the owner heard about me through a friend."
- "By a phone interview after she had read my resume."
- "Recommended and interviewed."
- "Through friends and part-time work."
- "Not by that boss."
- "After 11 years, we have become more a family than a workplace atmosphere."
- "My previous experience in supervising Navy Recruiters was helpful."
- "By an application."
- "Applied, interviewed, and schooling."

(7) How would you describe your . . .

(a) Leadership style (behaving and relating with employees)?

- "Always be fair, honest, respect and treat others the same."
- "Hands on; hard worker; love of people."
- "Authority."
- "Sometimes I want to be too independent."
- "Collaborative."
- "We all work together to get the job accomplished — Christian workplace."
- "I think I'm a people person. At least I listen to people's problems or opportunities."

(b) Thinking style (processing information, ideas, concepts, etc.)?

- "Be open to other ideas and not be afraid to try new things."
- "Enjoy getting to the bottom of the issue and building strong foundations."
- "Analytical."
- "I probably over do this [thinking?] — It can be stressful."
- "Supervisor listens to what we have to say."
- "A group thinker. Also, I believe people involved with the work have the best ideas."
- "It's getting weaker."

(c) Expectations as an employee?

- "Work for my boss as if I'm working for the Lord."
- "I wanted to do the very best I could."
- "Perfection or close to it. But I am trying to become more tolerant."
- "I usually expect too much — wanting everyone to give 100% all the time!"
- "Clear expectations and consequences."
- "To interact with others as we would want them to interact with us."
- "To be listened to. Also, to understand a problem and ways to fix it."
- "Retired and hope to take it easy."

(8) What are your . . .

(a) Strengths?

- "I love people, and try to show that in my actions."
- "Faithful, hard worker, enjoy people, flexible, teachable."
- "Organization, knowledge."
- "Commitment, awareness, dependability."
- "Experience."
- "Patience, listening, working out sound solutions."
- "Humility."
- "Honesty and strong in spirit."

(b) Weaknesses?

- "Not aggressive enough at times."
- "Don't like conflict. Don't promote myself; lack confidence. Not competitive enough."
- "Intolerance, lack of patience."
- "Expecting too much."
- "Not very technological."
- "When it's a strenuous day, I want to complete all work before I go home — not possible all the time."
- "Too many to list."
- "Not being as knowledgeable as I would like to be."

**You and Your Boss:**

(9) When you first started working at the company, did you have any . . .

(a) Successes (e.g., accomplishments) . . . or Failures (e.g., poor performances)?

- "No — hadn't worked since I was a teen."
- "Yes, most of my students passed."
- "No, other than the desire to do my best."
- "Yes — established a financial counseling system for credit union members in need."
- "Worked only a short time . . . [as I] wanted a different job to help get W.W. II over."
- "Received blue slips for job well done — given to volunteers and employees."
- "I am a self-made success, I have found out."
- "Yes, lack of experience led to ill-run classes."
- "I went back to Business School at age 30 and passed top of my class."

(b) Expectations, especially of your boss? — If so, what were these?

- “To be honest — someone he could trust with taking in rent payment for a large apartment community.”
- “Fairness and clarity.”
- “I expected emotional support and helpful hints.”
- “More assistance.”
- “To do the best you can.”
- “I think I met most of those but I didn’t know what was expected.”

[a general summary comment]

“In most places, employers will let you make of your job what you want — particularly if you don’t complain about your salary, have learned, take broad advantage of every opportunity for/with your skills. Who knows, someday someone may notice and recognize your contributions to an organization — and who knows but maybe one day you become king . . . or in my case, queen! ☺

(10) To any of your “successes” or accomplishments/achievements as you started . . .

- “I had a lot of good ideas to bring people into see the model apt.”

(a) How did your boss react? Why do you think this was the reaction(s)?

- “Very well — bragged on me. It made the company more income.”
- “He appreciated a job well done.”
- “Was impressed.”
- “He acknowledged my work as being very good and a real contribution to the office.”
- “Jealousy — Surprise.”
- “Very pleased with our work.”
- “1<sup>st</sup> boss: sometimes with pay raise or advancement; 2<sup>nd</sup>: sometimes with disinterest.”
- “He was okay — He understood my reasons [for leaving for another job]”

(b) How might you have responded to your boss’ reactions? Might you have done anything differently, in relationship to your boss at that time? — If so, what?

- “I said, ‘Thank you’ for his praise and went on about being a good employee.”
- “Not a clue.”
- “I left that employment for another position and I was soon making almost twice as much money.”



(11) If your relationship with your boss is “bad” . . .

- “Now have a new boss and a new beginning.”
- “I don’t have a bad boss.”

(a) How is this strain and stress manifested?

- “Sometimes when managers that were put in place were not fair, I went into the rest room for a prayer break.”
- “Folks are frustrated — the workers work harder and the slackers work less.”
- “(Previous boss) Frustration on my part; lack of respect also.”
- “I guess I was fortunate to have a good boss!”
- “By complaints from female employees. By him putting out a memo while I was out of state at financial meeting in Atlanta.”
- “None.”
- “It has taken its toll on my spiritual well-being.”

(b) Do you have anyone to support you concerning this stress? Who and how?

- “A coworker, and also the owners themselves if I told them.”
- “Other hard workers — and my supervisor.”
- “(previous boss) One of my colleagues. Listened to my complaints and gave advice.”
- “Yes, one member of the Board of Directors.”
- “Yes, my husband.”
- “There are those who say they are there, but they really aren’t there.”

(c) What response options to your “bad” (difficult) boss . . .

(i) do you have?

- “Talk it over with them.”
- “Ask for clear delineation of duties — and realistic ones.”
- “(Previous boss) Ignore him or defend myself.”
- “Leave or suffer quietly.”
- “Now I have none — then I had great contempt for the man.”
- “Quit!?”
- “Outlive him.”

(ii) what are the pros and cons of each option?

- "They may listen and understand — or they may not."
- "(Previous boss) (1) Ignore: Pro = less strain on my part; Con = his ego would suffer & he would respect me less. (2) Defend myself: Pro = my voice would be heard; Con = Boss' ideas would not change."
- "Leave or suffer — Both choices are stressful."
- "Having contempt for anyone is not healthy, but now I feel exonerated."
- "I got what I wanted and let go of what I did not want."
- "Quit, but I need money and it takes time to look for another job."
- "Outlive him — Change doesn't happen overnight!"

(iii) which one(s) are or will be your strategy, with your boss? Why?

- "Talk it over and pray for God's help to deal with the problem."
- "State the problem and hope they figure out how to change things."
- "(Previous boss) No longer my boss."
- "Leave."
- "Let your conscience be your guide with God's help."

(12) Since you have been working for him/her,

(a) has he/she failed, and if so in what ways?

- "At times . . ."
- "Failed to give clear guidance to everyone."
- "Failed to take the students' threats seriously."
- "Poor choices; poor supervision at new building."
- "By being inconsiderate; by being a coward."

(b) at such times, what were your thoughts and response(s) — and why?

- "I felt badly for her and prayed for her."
- "Wanted to quit."
- "That he's not right for this job; his ego is too big — but he doesn't realize either one."
- Pro: raised my voice, which demeaned me;
- Con: confronted him due to my frustration."
- "Brought [forth] suggestions that were ignored."
- "Felt very alone as if he was trying to make me angry so I'd quit which I eventually did."
- "I felt I had made the right decision."

[a general summary comment]

- Yes, to all the above. But as I predicted, he is realizing quickly his faults and realizing who is there to help him — unfortunately I'm not sure if it's not too late! I stay at my job because it conforms to my life style and my family. I will out live this situation!"

## APPENDIX M

### **Employee-Oriented Workplace Bible Studies**

#### **A New or First Job — Called to It**

- 1 — Obeying God's Call to a New Location and a New Role — Abram/Abraham  
GENESIS 12:1-13:4
- 2 — Questioning God's Call to Lead — Moses  
EXODUS 3:1-4:20
- 3 — Resisting God's Call: Literally Running Away — Jonah (part 1)  
JONAH 1-2
- 4 — Resisting God's Call: Spiritually Running Away — Jonah (part 2)  
JONAH 3-4
- 5 — Answering God's Call — Isaiah  
ISAIAH 6:1-9a
- 6 — Following Jesus' Call — Disciples  
MARK 2:13-17; 3:13-19

#### **A New or First Job — Starting It**

- 1 — An Inaugural Prayer — Solomon  
1 KINGS 3:1-15
- 2 — A Strange Assignment — Noah  
GENESIS 6:5-7:16; 8:13-22; 9:8-17
- 3 — An Assignment Different from One's Abilities — Gideon  
JUDGES 6:1-4
- 4 — Taking "the Mantle" of Leadership — Elisha  
2 KINGS 2:1-18
- 5 — Replacing a Legend and Superstar — Joshua  
JOSHUA 1:1-18
- 6 — Using the Right Resources — David  
1 SAMUEL 17:1-54

#### **Being Faithful in Secular Settings**

- 1 — Faithful through Faith — Daniel and His Friends  
DANIEL 1:1-20
- 2 — Faithful through Fellowship — Daniel with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego  
DANIEL 1-2
- 3 — Faithful amid Injustice and Persecution — Joseph (Palace or Prison / Top or Bottom)  
GENESIS 39:1-23
- 4 — Faithful Against Intolerance and Prejudice — Esther  
ESTHER 3:1-4:17
- 5 — Faithful as a Rebuilder — Nehemiah  
NEHEMIAH 1-2
- 6 — Faithful as a Reconciler — Philemon

## PHILEMON

**Being An Honest Advisor to Your Boss**

- 1 — Giving Criticism to the Leader — Nathan  
2 SAMUEL 12:1-14
- 2 — Giving “the Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth” — Micaiah  
2 CHRONICLES 18:1-34
- 3 — How to Give Advice Effectively — Jethro  
EXODUS 18:1-27
- 4 — Giving a “Minority Report” — Caleb  
NUMBERS 13(1-15) 16-14:9, 26-38
- 5 — Sharing or Withholding Information — Lepers  
2 KINGS 7:3-16a
- 6 — Giving Advice, in a Life-and-Death Situation — Daniel  
DANIEL 5:1-31

**Temptation and Sin**

*(this can certainly be topic for study by Employers too)*

- 1 — Temptation: Misinterpreting God’s Word — Eve and Adam  
GENESIS 3:1-24
- 2 — Temptation: Jealousy and Anger — Cain  
GENESIS 4:1-16
- 3 — Giving into Temptation: Being in the Wrong Place — David  
2 SAMUEL 11:1-27
- 4 — Fighting Temptation and the Tempter — Jesus  
MATTHEW 4 / MARK 4
- 5 — Fleeing Temptation but Not the Lord — Joseph  
GENESIS 39:1-23
- 6 — Aware of Temptation and Help in Facing Temptation  
1 CORINTHIANS 10:13 & HEBREWS 4:12-16

## APPENDIX N

### **Employer-Oriented Workplace Bible Studies**

#### **Taking Care of Your People**

- 1 — Different Responsibilities yet All Recognized — David and His Men  
1 SAMUEL 30:1-25
- 2 - Caring for the Challenged and Less Fortunate — David and One Man  
2 SAMUEL 9:1-13
- 3 - Helping Others: When Requested and When Recognized — Jesus  
LUKE 7:1-17
- 4 — Pleading for Help — Jesus' Healing  
MARK 7:24-37
- 5 - Preventing Social Embarrassment — Jesus, Unexpectedly as a Spectator  
JOHN 2:1-11
- 6 - Servant Leadership — Jesus as Example  
JOHN 13:1-17

#### **Selecting, Training, and Mentoring Employees / Followers**

- 1 — Getting “The Right Man for the Job” — Samuel  
1 SAMUEL 16:1-23
- 2 — Focusing Followers — Gideon  
JUDGES 7:1-25e
- 3 — Equipping Workers — Nehemiah  
NEHEMIAH 4:1-23 (6:15-16)
- 4 — Instructing Others — Paul  
2 TIMOTHY 2:1-7, 14-26 and 3:1-17
- 5 — Serving Where You Are — “Exiles”  
JEREMIAH 29:1-23
- 6 — Encouraging Others — Barnabas  
ACTS 4:32-37; 9:19b-30; 15:36-41; II TIMOTHY 4:11

#### **Managing Crises and Handling Chaos**

- 1 — Surrounded by Obstacles and Opposition — Moses  
EXODUS 14:1-31
- 2 — Stormy Situation for Believers — Jesus  
MARK 4:35-41
- 3 — Stormy Situation... and Hopelessness — Paul (part 1 of 2)  
ACTS 27:1-20 (21-44)
- 4 — Stormy Situation . . . and Hope — Paul (part 2 of 2)  
ACTS 27:(1-20) 21-44
- 5 — Intervention to Resolve Conflict — Abigail  
1 SAMUEL 25:1-42
- 6 — Facing Fear and Depression — Elijah  
1 KINGS 19:1-18

### **How to Be a Self-Centered Leader**

- 1 — Jealous of a Successor — Saul  
1 SAMUEL 18:1-16; 24:1-22
- 2 — Eliminating a Possible Successor — Herod  
MATTHEW 2:1-23
- 3 — Seeking Positions of Power — Sons of Zebedee  
MARK 10:35-45 / MATTHEW 20:20-28
- 4 — Taking Another Person's Job — Uzziah  
2 CHRONICLES 26:1-23
- 5 — Not Listening to Older Advisors — Rehoboam  
1 KINGS 12:1-24
- 6 — Criticizing the Leader or Unhappy as #2 — Aaron and Miriam  
NUMBERS 12:1-15

### **Speaking Truth to Power — Standing Against Injustice and Immorality**

*(this can be a study topic for Employees too)*

- 1 — Interceding for the Oppressed and Mistreated — Moses  
EXODUS
- 2 — Opposing Ethnic-Racial Discrimination — Esther  
ESTHER 3:1-4:17
- 3 — Confronting the Boss' Sins — Nathan  
2 SAMUEL 12:1-14
- 4 — Confronting a Leader's Sin — John the Baptist  
MATTHEW 14:1-12
- 5 — Warning to Flee Destruction — Jeremiah  
JEREMIAH 21:1-22:9
- 6 — God's Word Against Wickedness — Jonah  
JONAH 3:1-10 (4:1-10)

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## VITA

Rae Otis “Bill” Weimer was born in New York City April 1, 1944 to Rae and Ruth Weimer. When his father moved from New York newspaper *PM* to University of Florida in 1949, Bill and his sister Ann grew up with their parents in Gainesville, Florida.

Bill’s degrees include a B.S. in Journalism from University of Florida at Gainesville, Florida (1967); a M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary at South Hamilton, Massachusetts (1974); a M.A. in Community Counseling from University of Mississippi at Oxford, Mississippi (1983); and a graduate Diploma in Command-Staff Leadership from Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island (1993).

Before seminary, he was a Surface Warfare Officer in the U.S. Navy (1967-1971). Ordained in 1974, Bill served in several positions: associate minister, minister, and campus minister in the Presbyterian Church United States (PCUS) before it merged into the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). He returned to active duty as a Navy Chaplain in 1981. He served in Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard—afloat and ashore, overseas and stateside, in combat, as a fleet chaplain, and at a service academy—and led humanitarian projects in Panama and in the Mediterranean and Black sea areas.

Bill retired from the Navy in May 2006 as a Captain after thirty years of service. He filled-in for two different senior pastors, during their six-month sabbaticals, at First and Third Presbyterian Churches in Norfolk, Virginia. In January 2008, he became pastor for the inter-denominational congregation of the Mariner Sands Chapel in Stuart, Florida.

He and his wife, Eathel Findley Bowie of Anderson, South Carolina, have two sons, Hunter and Ryan—married to Carolyn and Adrian—and three grandchildren.

Bill’s DMin work covered 2000-07, and his expected graduation is May 2008.